THE INFLUENCE OF BAUDELAIRE

IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND

BY

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PREFACE

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ERRATA

Page 11. Peladan *not* Pelladan.
„ 12. Mallarmé *not* Mallaré.
„ 56. *ἐν βίῳ not βιοῦ.*
„ 285. Sehnen *not* Sehnung.

minds.' Quite so—if we understand by that that it is impossible to isolate a writer from his age. But if genius is a product, a *product* of its race, its surroundings, and its times, it is also, and above all, a *cause.* Genius, through its own power, creates its own surroundings—that is what Taine would not see.

Baudelaire seems to us essentially the writer who, though he shows us the times and the surroundings in which he lived, above all shows us the strength of the genius who imposes himself on the world, of the man but for whose life, but for whose work, the world would

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PREFACE

THE critic's part is to listen to the echoes of a soul (the soul of a thinker or artist) as they sound through the world. Doubtless his first duty is to study at once the author he wishes to reveal to the public. But criticism as understood in these days has far too great a tendency to develop into a study of pathological psychology, and the critics are at pains to prove with mathematical precision that Goethe was a 'superior degenerate,' Flaubert a neurotic, Edgar Poe a drunkard. Does that explain why these three writers had so great an influence?

Sainte-Beuve discovered that there existed 'families of minds.' Quite so—if we understand by that that it is impossible to isolate a writer from his age. But if genius is a product, a *product* of its race, its surroundings, and its times, it is also, and above all, a *cause*. Genius, through its own power, creates its own surroundings—that is what Taine would not see.

Baudelaire seems to us essentially the writer who, though he shows us the times and the surroundings in which he lived, above all shows us the strength of the genius who imposes himself on the world, of the man but for whose life, but for whose work, the world would

in some way, great or small, have been other than it is.

His influence has been maintained through fifty years of literary history, and we have found pleasure in listening, in the works of later writers, for the magic echoes of the voice that is still.

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PART I

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAUDELAIRIAN SPIRIT

I

THERE exists a state of mind, or rather a manner of feeling, which has grown upon a great number of nineteenth-century writers. The critics and the public—without coming to a mutual understanding about it—gave it the name of 'Baudelairism,' doubtless because Baudelaire is certainly the writer who was most intimately acquainted with, and who most experienced those subtle and intricate feelings, the expression of which we find in the works of a large number of nineteenth-century writers.

The fact that he founded a literary school which to this day has many disciples would alone serve as a justification for undertaking this study.

But the few moralists who have studied Baudelaire's work have been able to see in it nothing but a kind of love of evil and a theory of decadence. If we must recognise that such a criticism may apply to a few disciples of Baudelaire, yet it appears to us to be a duty to demur forthwith to such an ingenuous theory.

Here again, in the search for precise terms, truth has been passed over.

The sentiments of men and women are so complex, they come, they throng in upon us with such rapidity, and in such vast numbers, that it were really too presumptuous to wish to tie them down into some little formula.

Perhaps such an indiscriminate view would have been avoided if the critics had sought to discover the causes of

this state of mind, when, having discovered them, they would have found themselves in the company of such essentially reasonable and in nowise decadent writers as Benjamin Constant, Alfred de Vigny, and Sainte-Beuve.

Finding themselves in this way in the presence of *men*, they would have been in the presence of *reality*, and would have had less chance of being led into error than by following the will-o'-the-wisp of their imagination—christened for the occasion 'spirit of criticism.'

For whomsoever would understand Baudelaire, the first book to be taken is Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*.

Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*, like Voltaire's *Candide*, or the Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, is one of those little books that travel through the ages with nothing to fear from the ravages of time.

It is now nearly a hundred years since it was written, and it remains as true and as living as on its first appearance. Such an accent of truth passes through it that no psychologist can afford to ignore it. At the end of his little book the author says :—

'I hate that vanity which is occupied with itself in recounting the evil it has wrought, which under pretence of gaining pity describes itself, and which towering among ruins analyses itself instead of repenting.'

Now, that is precisely what Benjamin Constant did himself in his story, and what Baudelaire later on was to do so well.

M. Paul Bourget devoted a study to *Adolphe*, which is so acute that we would wish to quote it in its entirety. We will content ourselves, however, with quoting a few essential sentences which will allow us in our turn to go a little further.

'It would seem that this detestable acuteness of conscience cannot be dulled even by the burning dissolving joy of a most keenly felt passion. It might even be said that therein lies the whole drama

of *Adolphe*: the continual destruction of Love by analysis in the young man's heart, and the continual effort on his mistress's part to reconstruct by dint of passion and tenderness that feeling which she sees decaying. When he is with her he begins again to love her; when he is far from her he becomes once more bent upon destroying his own emotion, till Elléonore, at the end of this singular contest which is wellnigh unintelligible for her, feels that infinite lassitude which makes her long for death. She has spent years intoxicating herself with *her* love, believing herself intoxicated with the love of them both. This is almost Adolphe's formula. She understands it, she feels it, and she writes that heart-breaking letter:

'"*Pourquoi vous acharnez-vous sur moi?*" . . .'

It seems to us that M. Bourget might have gone further, and said that the whole drama of *Adolphe* lies not only in the continual destruction of the love in the young man's heart by analysis, but in the continual *reconstruction* of this love by the young man.

Away from his mistress, Adolphe knows that he causes her suffering, and is sorry for it, then he comes back to her in a great impulse of love.

'At the same time I was horribly afraid of hurting her. The moment I saw a pained expression on her face, her will was mine. I was only at my ease when she was pleased with me. When, after insisting upon the necessity of going away for a few minutes, I had succeeded in leaving her, the idea of the pain I had caused her followed me everywhere. I was seized with a fever of remorse that grew momentarily stronger, and which finally became irresistible; I flew back to her, looking forward to consoling and pacifying her.'

And the tragic story goes on with what I would venture to call the very switchback of love.

In the end all that remains is the pleasure Adolphe finds in analysing himself.

Now, herein lies a psychological problem so important, that we must pause for a little to consider it.

The majority of philosophers have remarked upon that curious state of mind in which a sufferer rejoices in his suffering which he analyses, and in reality admires.

The most recent of these, Herbert Spencer, in the second volume of his *Psychology*,[1] analyses those feelings which he calls 'the luxury of pity and the luxury of pain.' We quote one of the passages, though submitting at once that we only accept Herbert Spencer's explanation for a certain number of cases, and that had he read *Adolphe*, he would have given a more complete explanation :—

'All those cases where the luxury of pity is experienced are cases where the person pitied has been brought by illness or by misfortune of some kind to a state which excites this love of the helpless. Hence the painful consciousness which sympathy produces is combined with the pleasurable consciousness constituted by the tender emotion. Verification of this view is afforded by sundry interpretations it yields. Though the saying that "pity is akin to love" is not true literally, since in their intrinsic natures the two are quite unlike, yet that the two are so associated that pity tends to excite love is a truth forming part of the general truth above set forth. That pleasure is found in reading a melancholy story or witnessing a tragic drama is also a fact which ceases to appear strange, and we get a key to the seeming anomaly that very often one who confers benefits feels more affection for the person benefited than the person benefited feels for him.'

At first sight we are inclined to agree with Herbert Spencer, and to content ourselves with his explanation, but when we come to think of Adolphe we see that this explanation does not cover all the phenomena.

Adolphe is essentially an egoist; Benjamin Constant enjoyed the *egoistic* pleasure of pity. This man who seeks to kill the love he feels, and in which he is as it were immersed, and who then works himself into 'a fever from fear of not seeing her whom he loves,' this man who is continually analysing himself, who loves sorrow for sorrow's sake, and enjoys at once the luxury of pity and the luxury of pain—this man brings us to an explanation of these phenonema quite different from that of Spencer.

Before explaining them we should recognise that they

[1] pp. 624-9.

are very well known, only Adolphe was able to analyse them, and analysed them most admirably.

Let us have recourse to our own daily observation. We all know people, among our relatives or among our friends, who take pleasure in tormenting themselves, and who never seem really happy unless they have a pretext for being sad. We also know people in whom pity is not unaccompanied by a hint of malevolence. La Rochefoucauld declares that in the misfortune of our dearest friends there is something which is not displeasing to us. And with this idea of La Rochefoucauld's should be compared Tolstoy's remark in his Memoirs, where he says, speaking of a girl: 'She pleased me so much that I felt an irresistible desire to do or say something that would be disagreeable to her.'

Shall we also quote Shelley, who writes in the *Defence of Poetry*:—

'Tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth."'

Again, we remember the exclamation of Alfred de Musset: 'How does it come to pass that there exists in us something that loves unhappiness?'

We see then that the phenomenon is well known. Further proofs can be found in consulting records of trials; it will be frequently found that man will harm that which he loves, merely for the sake of watching its suffering.

The famous George Selwyn—the living embodiment of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *convive des dernières fêtes*—is another example of the same phenomenon.

How then shall we explain this? Just as our soul is in nowise immutable, but is open to evolution and

modification, even so is our mind a great battlefield where all our feelings struggle against one another with a tendency to destroy each other.

In Adolphe—as in all men—the various states of mind are at issue with one another. Adolphe is at once love and hatred, just as we at once are good and evil. Benjamin Constant is in love and suffers, which is the most natural thing in the world: because love makes us doubt even of the most proven facts; because love engenders doubts of love. That Adolphe should take pleasure in his pain, that he should analyse it, delight in it, that he should now love and now hate, is an entirely probable state in the eyes of the psychologist for whom conditions of mind are neither precise nor immutable.

Let us take the most commonplace example. If the spectacle of a tragic drama affords us pleasure, it is because the representation we make of it for ourselves has not suspended all activity of our mind; it has engaged in a contest with other states of mind, and the crash of discord has resulted into harmony, and it is this harmony which makes us find pleasure in pain.

When there is suspension of all activity of mind, as the result of a truly great sorrow, such as the death of some one we have loved, then there is really suffering, *because there is no longer a struggle.*[1] In the same way, in great love, in that love which is stronger than death, there is again no contest. Love reigns as a master, to the destruction of all other feelings.

We repeat, pity is far from being always generous. The well-known lines of Lucretius, '*Suave mari magno*,' well point out how great is the struggle within us in those complex feelings where pleasure is mingled with pain. Sorrow tries to disorganise a habit of mind, to disturb the

[1] Cp. D. G. Rossetti, 'Woodspurge':—

'For perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory. . . .'

quiet of the soul, and does not entirely succeed, and the resulting state gives us a feeling of pleasure.

Now, in an artist, in a man, that is to say, whose senses are sharpened, these feelings may be subtilised by reflection till they border on perversion. And that is exactly what happens with many of Baudelaire's disciples, and from time to time with Baudelaire himself. The boundary-line between such complex feelings is so fugitive that it is impossible for a writer not to cross the frontier.

II. Sainte-Beuve.

The case of Sainte-Beuve, who is the second stage in the approach to Baudelaire, seems to be, curiously enough, a natural consequence of what we have just advanced, or rather suggested.

Man needs a *guiding principle*, in accordance with which all the elements of his mind shall be regulated, which gives to his impressions that spiritual guidance which enables him to judge them, to declare them good or bad, and to experience from them either pleasure or pain. 'By the law is knowledge of sin,' says Saint Paul.

Now, Sainte-Beuve's novel *Volupté* will enable us to penetrate into one of the most eminent and one of the most curious minds of the nineteenth century, and will bring us closer to the mind of Baudelaire. Here, again, we shall be the spectators of a struggle, the struggle between *luxury* and morality, a spectacle which will make us better able to understand, later on, the anguish of the author of the *Fleurs du Mal.*

Sainte-Beuve had received a deeply religious education, to which he was ultimately to owe the power of writing his masterpiece *Port Royal.* But, on leaving college (and perhaps even before then), he was preoccupied by the idea of *pleasure*, and soon the idea of *luxury* entered into his soul never to leave it again.

'From seventeen to eighteen,' says Amaury—that is, Sainte-Beuve,—'this fixed idea of the voluptuous side of things never left me. But one day I got into my head the suspicion that I was afflicted with a kind of ugliness which would rapidly increase and disfigure me; an icy despair followed upon this so-called discovery. . . . When I was with the young men of my acquaintance I was continually comparing myself with them, and envying the most foolish countenances.'

Thus we find Sainte-Beuve throwing himself desperately into excess from pure rage.

Yet, and this is the important point, excesses, far from destroying his soul, that soul which his mother had given so much thought to fashioning with her careful pious hands, refined it and enabled him to make a great discovery. Sainte-Beuve is certainly the Amerigo Vespucci of that America of which Baudelaire was the Christopher Columbus.

'After the first stupefaction . . . it came about that I gained great knowledge, the subtle recognition of good and evil, . . . a mysterious and dearly-bought analysis taught me daily some new quality in our *double nature*, and the abuse I was making of both sides of it, and the secret of their union. Knowledge in itself sterile and powerless, at once instrument and lot of punishment. I understand better what man is, what I am, and what I leave behind as I penetrate further along the paths that lead to death.'

So then, the new idea that Sainte-Beuve brings us, and which helps us to the better understanding of Baudelaire, is this: A system of morality, religious practices, far from being an obstacle in the way of sin and the delight in sin, may even on the contrary be found to be an aid to the delight in sin.

This fact which may appear paradoxical explains itself quite well, if the conditions in which the pleasure or the pain are produced have been fully understood.

The horror of sin is one of the conditions favourable to the experiencing of the love of sin, always provided that

the horror is sufficiently weakened, either by the violence of passion or by the pleasure of analysis. Stendhal's well-known story of the Italian lady who said to him one day: 'Voilà un bon sorbet, néanmoins il serait meilleur s'il était un péché!' is a proof of the truth of the theory we are putting forward.

And there again is the reason—let it be acknowledged forthwith—why so many 'baudelairising' writers were, or became, Catholics.

Barbey d'Aurevilly wished to become a believer. He wrote to Baudelaire after reading the *Fleurs du Mal*: 'There are only two things for the poet who produced these blossoms to do: either blow his brains out or become Christian.' Villiers de l'Isle Adam was a Catholic, just as M. Pelladan is, if I am not mistaken. Doubtless the Catholicism of these writers is a troubled thing, in which priests would refuse to discover any Christianity at all; but enough of this Catholicism exists to impose a rule, and this rule in its turn enables them to obtain more enjoyment from their sensations.

This search for sensation necessarily led—in the realm of language—to the most remarkable revolution in style ever seen since the seventeenth century, and in the realm of ideas, to mysticism and occultism on the one hand, and to perversion on the other.

At first Baudelaire was ranged among the Parnassians, and indeed it is to them that he belonged with his theory of the superiority of form over content, with his profound indifference to everything that is not picture, rhyme, or cadence.

But when the Symbolist school appeared, declaring that the Parnassians' day was over, because they *lacked mystery*, how comes it that Baudelaire became the idolised master before whom were sacrificed the books of his friends and contemporaries?

The reason is that with Baudelaire the pursuit of

sensation had led him to this discovery: *Les formes, les couleurs, et les sons se répondent.*

Henceforth the art of the poet consisted in discovering those mysterious 'correspondences' which exist between all things. This was at one stroke to renew the inspiration of all French poetry.

An art of decadence say some, an art of renaissance say others—in any case an art which is singularly interesting, and an admirable expression of its age.

When Stéphane Mallarmé wrote,

'To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the power of the poem which consists in the delight in guessing little by little; to suggest, that is the dream. It is the perfect employment of this mystery which constitutes the symbol; little by little to evoke an object, to show a state of the soul, or inversely to choose an object and from it evolve a state of mind by a series of decipherings,'

what was he doing if not continuing in the footsteps of Baudelaire?

The whole theory of the symbolists is contained in Baudelaire: for with these poets the great aim is to force Nature to deliver up her secret, to reveal what lies hid, under the diversity of things: '*Les formes, les couleurs, et les sons se répondent.*'

Was it not Baudelaire who found in colour, *harmony, melody and counterpoint*?

Here again modern art has undergone the influence of this theory: we see it in some of the latter-day pictures, or in those orchestrations where the strident brass drowns the softer voices of violin or flute.

Arthur Rimbaud's famous sonnet which has been so much held up to derision, 'A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu,' etc., what was it but the natural consequence of the Baudelairian theory?

And without going any further—if we take the book of the moment, *Marie Claire*, by Marguerite Audoux, we find

that her most original expressions are such as to rejoice the heart of every Baudelairian:—

'Je trouvai que ses paroles avaient une *odeur* insupportable. En la regardant—je pensais à un puits profond et noir qui aurait été plein *d'eau chaude*.'

'*Les formes, les couleurs, les sons se répondent.*'

What could be more natural than that such an art should please in our age? On the one hand, the excess of naturalism with the Zola school was bound to produce a violent reaction and make the success of Baudelairism. The eye that has long seen nothing but red is only too ready to see everything green.

But the actual life of the present day is far too brutal, and Science herself far too pessimistic for the soul not to feel the need of taking refuge, as Baudelaire says, 'anywhere, out of the world.'

There are no longer monasteries as in the age of the barbaric invasions where a tender, sensitive soul could withdraw, but, as with Alfred de Vigny and Baudelaire, there are minds who have made for themselves an ivory tower, an ideal cloister where they can take refuge from *l'œil des Barbares*.

And here we see the reason why this poetry has remained the realm of the lettered. The Beauty worshipped of these men is not the ideal of the man in the street. In this utilitarian world of ours they seek out the pure, immaculate goddess—whom the dreamers of the Middle Ages incarnated in Helen.

'Ce ne seront jamais ces beautés de vignettes,
Produits avariés, nés d'un siècle vaurien,
Ces pieds à brodequins, ces doigts à castagnettes,
Qui sauront satisfaire un cœur comme le mien.'—*L'Idéal.*

'Je suis belle, o mortels! comme un rêve de pierre,
Et mon sein, où chacun s'est meurtri à son tour,
Est fait pour inspirer au poète un amour
Éternel et muet ainsi que la matière.

Je trône dans l'azur comme un sphinx incompris,
J'unis un cœur de neige à la blancheur des cygnes ;
Je hais le mouvement qui déplace les lignes ;
Et jamais je ne pleure et jamais je ne ris.'—*La Beauté.*

This desire for beauty is nothing else than the longing for harmony which always exists deep down in our nature, and which manifests itself the more forcibly in proportion as our beliefs are more dispersed and less satisfying.

Scientific positivism has created a world which is far too simple, and from that springs the desire to discover an underlying, vast, unknowable world of which we can doubtless say nothing, but which satisfies our innate desire to live with beauty.

And in this way we have come back to the methods of our ancestors. So do the centuries join hands! Primitive nations expressed their cosmogonies in poems.

The only reproach that can be made is, that in certain cases this pursuit of sensation was really artificial, or if it was not completely so at first, became so later on when the seekers had recourse to opium and hashish.

III. Alfred de Vigny.

We have already said that if moral faith is needed to make a sin appear pleasing, yet at the same time this faith must be in a somewhat weakened state. This brings us to the third stage before arriving at Baudelaire.

Alfred de Vigny is certainly the romantic poet (*i.e.* of the precursors of Baudelaire), who reflected most, and whose pessimism is the most overwhelming.

Victor Hugo supplements lack of thought by the richness of his images, and even if we grant him the title of thinker, he did little more than reflect the opinion of each decade he passed through. Alfred de Vigny, on the contrary, is a truly original genius, and with him vigour of thought always compensates weakness of expression.

In order to understand fully the originality of his thought, we must remember that when he was writing (and how many writers of our own day hold the same idea !), the favourite theory was that which the eighteenth century had promulgated with such pomp. Nature was good, she was a mother; an unconscious one doubtless, but one who watched over our lives. Man was born good; it was religion with its shackles and its superstitions that had made him wicked. Do away with religion, and forthwith the golden age would appear on earth.

Together with this theory there was that Christian belief which the *Génie du Christianisme*, the works of Bonald and Joseph de Maistre, the influence of Lamenais and of Lacordaire, the early poetry of Lamartine had, as it were, revivified.

Now, Alfred de Vigny was one of the first—and certainly the first poet—to say (and this is why he is still read to-day) that the universe offers us in place of that harmony attributed to it, nothing other than a *distressing spectacle.* Herein he came near the Catholics. If he had only repeated in French verse the melancholy music of Ecclesiastes, he would still be a great poet, but he would not be what he is. But happily for him he came on the eve of the publication of Darwin's book, in which his readers found a confirmation of the pessimistic doctrine, so deeply had that doctrine penetrated all minds. From that moment Alfred de Vigny was hailed as *Thinker.*

Darwin was always a deist; doubtless he was grateful to God for having created a universe that fitted in so well with his theory.

But the French poet, impatient of any yoke, saw only the brutal side of his theory and the struggle for existence. In this way the power of religion was growing steadily weaker and weaker, and if science became the religion of such men as Renan or Taine, a moral anarchy

was established in those minds which had no taste for scientific research. And not only moral anarchy, but a feeling a thousand times more painful, that of the *solitude of the soul.*

If a man belong to a religious sect, when he can take refuge in something so definitely consoling, he never feels isolated: the soul carries on with God those immortal dialogues which are the mystic literature of the ages. But when he is separated by thought from those religious traditions which are like the protection a father gives to his child, when he is unable to believe in one or other deistic dogma, then a truly terrible solitude grows upon him: the anguish of this emptiness is so fearful, and human nature has such an instinctive horror of it, that perhaps here we are lighting upon the explanation of the conversion of a Paul Bourget or a Brunetière.

However that may be, Alfred de Vigny is the poet of that solitude of the soul, whether he be showing, as in 'Moise,' that genius is always lonely; whether, as in the 'Mort du Loup,'—that admirable poem of Stoicism—he shows the solitude of the persecuted and dying soul; whether, as in the 'Maison du Berger,' he shows the solitude of the soul in its happiness; or whether, as in the 'Colère de Samson,' he shows the solitude of the soul in love.

Solitude of the soul in its happiness, solitude of the soul in its love, is that not already Baudelaire? And what does the poet of the *Fleurs du Mal* do, if not explain in his own way the anguish of a soul for ever in exile, in a land which seems not to be his fatherland?

And that hatred of woman,

> 'Car plus ou moins la femme est toujours Dalila,'

do we not find it all through the most immortal passages of Baudelaire?

Let us sum up :—

1. The faculty of self-analysis and self-torment in love (*Adolphe*).
2. Pursuit of lust mingling with it a kind of sacrilegious pleasure (Sainte-Beuve, *Volupté*). Pursuit of sensation at any cost with its inevitable consequences: perversity and madness on the one hand, mysticism on the other ;—creation of a new language.
3. Moral anarchy, overwhelming pessimism and terrible solitude of the soul (A. de Vigny).

Such in our view are the elements which constitute the Baudelairian spirit—they will all be found to a greater or less degree in the writers we are going to study here ; and when we have finished our study we shall not flatter ourselves that we have studied all the minds which adorned the nineteenth century, but we shall have studied those who have expressed its temper, those which make it different from the seventeenth as well as from the eighteenth century.

PART II

BAUDELAIRE

To say, as we have just done, that Benjamin Constant, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny explain Baudelaire is doubtless *the* important fact for a mind-naturalist. It only remains for him to show the intimate connection existing between Baudelaire and the end of the nineteenth century and he will feel he has acquitted his task well, since he will have shown that Baudelaire is the living synthesis of some thirty years.

However, without neglecting that study of his age which we look forward to making in due course, we believe that the element really necessary in the work of great writers is just that mysterious element that they bring with them at birth and which they do not owe to the influence of their *milieu*.

Of course, there is a side of their talent in which they resemble their contemporaries, and through which they are representative of their age ; but it is the side in which they are themselves which is the interesting side for the psychologist, for here something new presents itself—a human personality ; and that is what the ordinary reader realises in some way. What does he demand of the poet? The explanation of his age? Not in the least. He demands *beauty*. It matters little to him if the work be useless from the social point of view ; the important question is, has the artist produced a beautiful work?

We will allow ourselves a digression in order to be the better understood.

Looking at the masterpieces of Watteau, who would suspect that of the thirty-seven years of his life thirty-one

were passed under Louis XIV., at the end of that reign when a great mourning veil seems to enfold the whole of France: with defeat following on defeat; with religious persecution; with the people dying of starvation; the court's brilliance darkened by continual mourning! Watteau did not get his nature from his age; he was born with a certain conception of the beautiful, and tried in his turn to express it on his canvas.

Even so, Baudelaire—though he belongs to his age much more than Watteau to his—was born with a certain temperament, and, in addition, the gift of style—a gift denied to so many great thinkers!

It is needless to seek any *influence* that would explain such lines as

'Toi qui comme un coup de couteau
Dans mon cœur plaintif es entrée,'

or

'Que m'importe que tu sois sage
Sois belle et sois triste.'

Such lines contain not only the poet's whole mind, but something else as well, something mysterious composed of a certain kind of temperament and a certain kind of imagination, and which cannot be reduced in the crucible of analysis.

As Jules Lemaître has wittily said in his criticism of Sainte-Beuve, the great sin of Sainte-Beuve lies in his being unable to write verses that are beautiful enough on the subject of his love.

Baudelaire, on the contrary, has written poems that will live as long as the French language. Let us say at once, that the great influence he has had is above all due to his style, or to his way of feeling and expression.

Having laid this down we can go forward to study how this feeling developed, in what surroundings it lived, in a word, to study in the following pages the sorrowful life of Charles Baudelaire.

Baudelaire was born in Paris in 1821. The most important event of his youth was the death of his father. His mother soon married again, an action which Baudelaire never forgave her. 'On ne se remarie pas lorsqu'on a des enfants comme moi,' he remarks. His stepfather sent him first to the *Collège de Lyon*, and later to the lycée Louis le Grand, and seems always to have cherished great hopes of Baudelaire's talents. Of his school days Baudelaire tells us little, though the following note from *Mon Cœur mis à nu* shows that even at that time he had no ordinary temperament: 'Feeling of solitude from my childhood, in spite of my family, and above all among my comrades—feeling of an eternally solitary destiny.' His school education was supplemented by the influence of his mother, a fervid and devout Catholic, and it is this side of his education which forms the first great influence in his life.

When the time came for him to leave college, Baudelaire, to the bitter disappointment of his parents, announced his intention of adopting literature as his profession. In their anxiety to persuade their son to change his mind his parents sent him on a long voyage to the East. He was to have gone as far as Calcutta, but it seems probable that he went no further than Mauritius when he determined to return, and this voyage is the second great influence in his life.

On his return to Paris, Baudelaire absolutely refused to change his decision as regards his career, and having now attained his majority, sold his property, and with the proceeds established himself in Paris and, with his naturally insatiable curiosity, set about seeing, observing everything. His friends at this moment were Louis Ménard, Le Vavasseur, Octave Feuillet, Leconte de Lisle, Pierre Dupont, Gérard de Nerval, and he was acquainted with Balzac and with Théophile Gautier.

His voyage, however, while it failed to accomplish its

object, left a lasting impression; we see its influence in the numberless exotic passages, and it is the same thing working out in the attraction he found in Jeanne Duval, the 'Vénus Noire' who has become an inseparable part of the Baudelaire legend.

Baudelaire met Jeanne Duval in 1842, when she was playing in some third-rate theatre. Contemporaries have left conflicting accounts of her, some finding her neither beautiful nor graceful, others with Baudelaire describing her mysterious beauty and her extraordinary grace so that *même quand elle marche on croirait qu'elle danse.*

Baudelaire, like the hero of Rodenbach's 'Bruges la Morte,' used a living woman as a means for rehabilitating the attractions of the past—this seems to me the only explanation of the attraction Jeanne Duval held for him.

'Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne
Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;

Une île paresseuse où la nature donne
Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux;
Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux,
Et des femmes dont l'œil par sa franchise étonne.

Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats
Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts,
Encor tout fatigués par la vague marine,

Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,'
Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,
Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers.'

And again these lines from 'La Chevelure':—

'La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique,
Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt,
Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique!
. . . . . .
N'es-tu pas l'oasis où je rêve, et la gourde
Où je hume à longs traits le vin du souvenir?'

She is for him the 'Mère des souvenirs,' and with her, as he says,

> 'Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses
> Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.'

At the time when Baudelaire decided to enter the honourable profession of letters a change in public taste was beginning to appear. Something of Wagner's theory of the universality of the arts had made its way to Paris.[1] Painting was very much talked of in literary circles, and it is a sign of the times that it was in the guise of art critic that Baudelaire first came before the public with his *Salon* of 1845. It was a brilliant piece of criticism—here is no groping débutant seeking his way; Baudelaire was instantly original and remarkable at once. The *Salon* met with immediate success.

This success gained him a position on the *Corsaire Satan*. In 1845 he contributed to it two articles of literary criticism: 'Les contes normands de Jean de Falaise,' and 'Romans contes et Voyages d'Arsène Houssaye.' In 1846, 'Prométhée délivré de N. de Senneville' (*i.e.* Louis Ménard), and two more art criticisms: 'Le Musée classique du bazar Bonne Nouvelle,' and the *Salon* of 1846. Then appeared another tale, 'Le Jeune Enchanteur,' and two essays, 'Choix de maximes consolantes sur l'amour,' and 'Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs.'

In the same year two more poems appeared in the *Artiste*, 'L'Impénitent' (Don Juan aux Enfers), and 'A une Indienne' (à une Malabaraise).

[1] Cp. Gautier: 'This intermingling of art with poetry was, and is, one of the characteristic signs of the new school, and explains why its first adepts were recruited among the artists rather than the men of letters. A host of objects, pictures and comparisons, believed to be irreducible to words, entered the language, to remain there. The sphere of literature has widened, and now encloses the sphere of art in its vast orbit.

And from 1846 onwards he is continually engaged on his translation of Edgar Poe.

In 1847 he published *Le Fanfarlo*, whose hero is a burlesque of himself. This is how he describes this Samuel Cramer :—

'At once a great idler, sad in his ambition, unhappy in his fame. . . . The man of abortive fine works ; a sickly and fantastic creature whose poetry shines far more in his person than in his books, and who towards one o'clock in the morning, between the flaming of a coal fire and the ticking of a clock, always appeared to me as the god of impotence—a modern and hermaphrodite god—impotence so vast that it is thereby epic. . . To the affairs of the mind and soul he applied that idle contemplation of Germanic natures, and to the practice of life all the whims of French vanity. He would have fought a duel for an author or an artist dead two centuries since. As he had been furiously devout, he became passionately atheistic. He was at once all the artists he had studied and all the books he had read, and yet in spite of this actor's faculty he remained profoundly original.'[1]

The year 1848 broke up the habit of regular work. Baudelaire, for all his aloof, unconcerned pose, was swept into the whirl of politics ; the Revolution occupied all his thought, and, contrary to our expectations, it was the democratic side which enlisted Baudelaire's sympathy. In his *Fusées* he refers to his action : 'My intoxication of 1848. What was the nature of this intoxication? Taste for vengeance ; natural pleasure ; destruction in literary intoxication ; recollections from reading.'

In 1852 he contributed two poems, 'Crépuscule du Matin' and 'Crépuscule du Soir,' to a paper called *Semaine Théâtrale*. This paper was very short-lived, and after its failure he tried to found another, but with equal unsuccess. Already he was becoming less productive ;

[1] Cp. Note to Reniement de Saint-Pierre, where he lays it down that the poet has an absolute right, that it is his duty, even 'as an actor does, to fashion his mind to fit every sophism, every corruption.'

between 1853 and 1855 he only published his 'Morale du joujou,' and 'L'Essence du Rire.' In 1857 Baudelaire published through Poulet Malassis the first edition of his *Fleurs du Mal.* Some of the poems had already appeared; in 1846 *L'Artiste* had given 'L'Impénitent' (Don Juan aux Enfers) and 'A une Indienne' (A une Malabaraise), and in 1855 the *Revue des Deux Mondes* published eighteen poems: 'Au Lecteur,' 'Réversibilité,' 'Le Tonneau de la Haine,' 'Confession,' 'L'Aube Spirituelle,' 'La Volupté,' 'Voyage à Cythère,' 'A la Belle aux cheveux d'or' (L'Irréparable), 'L'Invitation au Voyage,' 'Moesta et errabunda,' 'La Cloche,' 'L'Ennemi,' 'La Vie antérieure,' 'Le Spleen,' 'Remords posthume,' 'Le Guignon,' 'La Béatrice,' 'L'Amour et le Crâne.'[1] The year 1855 was a productive one with Baudelaire; besides these poems he had published in *Le Pays* a series of critical articles on art, methods of criticism, the modern idea of progress applied to art, and the displacement of vitality.

The *Fleurs du Mal* created at once a great sensation, and also a certain amount of scandal. Baudelaire was prosecuted on the ground of offence to public morality, and his publishers were fined.

It was about this time that Madame Sabatier came definitely into his life. The episode is singularly characteristic of the man. Here was a woman, beautiful, gifted, and sympathetic, and who practically offered herself to him. It was the fall of the idol. Baudelaire begins to analyse and to doubt. He writes to her:—

'Then, too, I told you yesterday you will forget me, you will betray me; he who now amuses you will tire you. And to-day I add this, he only will suffer who is fool enough to take seriously the things of the soul. You see, *ma belle chérie*, I have *odious* prejudices against women. In short, I have no faith. You have a beautiful soul, but after all it is a feminine soul. . . . And then, and then, a few days

[1] List quoted by M. Crepet: Charles Baudelaire.

ago you were a divinity, which is so agreeable, so fine, so inviolable. Now you are a woman. And if to my cost, I were to acquire the right of being jealous! How horrible even to think of! But with one such as you with eyes full of smiles and graciousness for every one, it must be martyrdom! . . .'

As Baudelaire says, he had no faith—here as in all things—yet the first thing a woman demands is trust. Madame Sabatier replied: 'Shall I tell you what I think, a cruel thought that hurts me very much? That you do not love me!'

In a later letter it is she who confesses her jealousy—of Jeanne Duval; yet at the end of the letter she can write in this vein:—

'Good morning, my Charles; how is what remains to you of a heart? Mine is quieter. I reason strongly with it so as not to tire you too much with its weaknesses. You will see! I shall be able to force it to descend to the temperature you have dreamed of. It is very certain I shall suffer, but to please you I will resign myself to bear all possible sufferings.'

And the astonishing thing is that they settled down into a quiet and lasting friendship. Baudelaire continued to visit Mme. Sabatier up to his departure for Brussels; and in his tragic last months she was constantly with him.

A few days after his prosecution Baudelaire published some prose pieces in *Le Présent*: 'Crépuscule du Soir,' 'Solitude,' 'Les Projets,' 'L'Horloge,' 'L'Invitation au Voyage.' In the latter part of the same year he published, in the same paper, his 'Quelques caricaturistes français,' and 'Quelques caricaturistes étrangers,' and in *L'Artiste* his article on Gustave Flaubert.

In 1858 appeared his translation of the adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym, and the first part of the *Paradis artificiels*, and in 1859 his article on Théophile Gautier.

Long before this, Baudelaire had been in considerable

financial straits and had found himself obliged to borrow money from his friend Poulet Malassis. At this moment Poulet Malassis' own affairs were in such a bad way that he seemed on the verge of bankruptcy, and Baudelaire, in search of new ways to make money, busied himself with plans for writing a drama. He was in the habit of reciting his poems at various gatherings, and a favourite piece was 'Le Vin de l'Assassin.' The actor Tisserand, on hearing it, suggested to Baudelaire that it might be worked up into a drama. Here is the plan as Baudelaire describes it in a letter to Tisserand :—

'Ma principale préoccupation quand je commençais à rêver a mon sujet, fut : à quelle classe, à quelle profession doit appartenir le personnage principal de la pièce? J'ai décidément adopté une profession lourde, triviale, rude : le scieur de long. Ce qui m'y a presque forcé, c'est que, j'ai une chanson dont l'air est horriblement mélancolique et qui ferait je crois un magnifique effet au théâtre, si nous mettons sur la scène le lieu ordinaire du travail, ou surtout si, comme j'en ai envie, je développe au troisième acte le tableau d'une goguette lyrique ou d'une lice chansonnière. Cette chanson est d'une rudesse singulière. Elle commence par :—

Rien n'est aussi-z-aimable
Fanforu—crancru—lou—la—lahira
Rien n'est aussi-z-aimable
Que le scieur de long.

Mon homme est rêveur fainéant ; il a ou il croit avoir des aspirations supérieures à son monotone métier et, comme tous les rêveurs fainéants il s'enivre.

Les deux premiers actes sont remplis par des scènes de misère, de chômage, de querelles de ménage, d'ivrognerie et de jalousie. Vous verrez tout à l'heure l'utilité de cet élément nouveau.

Le 3e. acte, la goguette — où sa femme de qui il vit séparé, inquiète de lui, vient le chercher. C'est là qu'il lui arrache un rendez-vous pour le lendemain soir dimanche.

Le 4e. acte le crime,—bien prémédité, bien préconçu. Quant à l'exécution je vous la raconterai avec soin.

Le 5e. acte (dans une autre ville), le dénoûment, c'est-à-dire la

dénonciation du coupable par lui-même, sous la pression d'une obsession. Comment trouvez-vous cela? Vous voyez comme le drame est simple. Pas d'imbroglios, pas de surprises—simplement, le développement d'un vice et des résultats successifs d'une situation.'

Later, Zola worked out the same idea in his long novel *L'Assommoir*. It is interesting to remark in passing that in dramatic form this work is no more successful than in the plans of Baudelaire.[1]

Further on in his letter Baudelaire describes in detail the crime which his hero is led to commit. It is almost identically the same as that of Petrus Borel's 'Passereau l'Ecolier'; we will therefore not quote in detail here, but return to it when we come to study Borel.

Baudelaire's drama was never written; he had not the essential dramatic gifts and recognised the fact.

In 1861 appeared the second edition of the *Fleurs du Mal*, and the article on 'Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser.' It is another tribute to Baudelaire's penetration that he appreciated the genius of the German master at a time when Wagner's music was the laughing-stock of Europe.

It was in this year, too, that he decided to present himself as a candidate for the Academy. As was only to be supposed, this candidature led to violent opposition, and in the end Baudelaire avoided inevitable defeat by withdrawing.

And now that Paris which he had observed with such enthusiasm began to tire him, and then to disgust him, and his financial outlook became more and more gloomy. Finally, in 1864, Baudelaire left Paris to settle definitely in Brussels.

He believed that he would be able to make money in Belgium, firstly by his writings, and secondly by giving lectures—a dream that he never realised. His letters

[1] *L'Assommoir*—drame en cinq actes et neuf tableaux. W. Busnach and O. Gastineau, Paris, 1881.

written from Belgium make sad reading; he only leaves off his tirades against the Belgians to complain of his poverty. He was never able to make money—in twenty-six years he made less than sixteen thousand francs—or, as M. Catulle Mendès worked it out, about one franc seventy a day!

The Belgians were always entirely uncongenial to him; he soon conceived a violent hatred for them. He writes to Manet in 1864:—

'The Belgians are fools, liars, and thieves. I have been the victim of the most impudent fraud. Here deception is the rule, and is no dishonour. . . . Never believe what you are told about Belgian good humour. Cunning, distrust, false affability, rudeness, knavery—yes!'

We can easily see, since such were his views, how Baudelaire was condemned to loneliness in Belgium:—

'As for conversation, the great, the only pleasure for an intellectual being, you may scour Belgium in every direction without discovering a soul who *speaks*. Many people flocked with idiotic curiosity around the author of the *Fleurs du Mal*. The author of the Flowers in question could not be other than an eccentric monster. All these blackguards took me for a monster, and when they saw that I was cold, moderate, and polite, that I had a horror of free-thinkers, progress, and all modern foolishness—they decreed (I suppose) that I was not the *author of my book*. What a comic confusion between the author and the subject! This unhappy book (of which I am very proud) is then very obscure, very unintelligible! I shall long bear the punishment for having dared to paint evil with some talent!'

In his irritation Baudelaire falls back on his favourite mystifying pose:—

'However, I must confess that for two or three months I have been giving rein to my character, and taking a peculiar pleasure in hurting people's feelings, in showing myself *impertinent*—a talent in which I excel, when I want to. But here that is not enough, *you must be coarse to be understood!* What a set of blackguards! I

who used to think France an absolutely barbaric country am forced to admit that there exists a country even more barbarous than France.'

Later on he writes to Mme. Paul Meurice :—

'I have been taken here for a police-inspector (that's good), thanks to that good article I wrote on the Shakespeare banquet; . . . then for a proof corrector sent from Paris to correct infamous works. Exasperated at always being believed, I spread the report that I had killed my father, and that I had eaten him, and that if I had been allowed to escape from France it was only on account of the services I had rendered to the French police, and I was BELIEVED! I am as at home in dishonour as a fish in water!'

Finally, his impatience turns to sadness, and he wants to be alone. 'I am wearied and suffer martyrdom. I have withdrawn from all society. I much prefer complete solitude to brutal, stupid and ignorant companionship.'

The only compensation Baudelaire found for living in Belgium lay in the friendship of Félicien Rops: 'the *only true artist* (in the sense in which I, and perhaps I alone, understand the word *artist*) that I have found in Belgium.'

He also speaks with admiration of the town of Mechelin. He tells us that if it had not been a Belgian town with a Flemish population he would have liked to live, and, above all, to die there. It appealed to him in just the same way as Bruges to Rodenbach; these words of Baudelaire might well have come from the pen of the later writer :—

'So many belfries, so many steeples, so much grass growing in the streets, and so many nuns! I discovered a marvellous Jesuit church that no one visits. In a word, I was so happy that I was able to forget the present, and I bought there some pieces of old delft.'

He characteristically adds that these were of course much dearer than they ought to have been, and once

more explodes into wrath: 'The whole race has become brutalised; the past alone is interesting.'

During the years Baudelaire passed in Belgium he finished his translation of Edgar Poe, and made great plans for a book on Belgium; this last was never finished. The reason was not indolence, the poet's health had begun to fail. The letters of the latter part of the year 1865 have frequent references to his ill-health, to the doctors' advice to give up stimulants, and to avoid worry and mental fatigue, and to his own inability to pay for the necessary remedies.

In 1866 he began to make plans for returning to Paris, but the journey was continually postponed. It was in March of this year that the crisis came. The father-in-law of Félicien Rops invited Baudelaire to Namur, an invitation which the latter gladly accepted, delighting in an opportunity of revisiting the old church of Saint-Loup. It was while he was making a tour of this church that he was suddenly seized with giddiness and fell. He recovered himself for the moment, but the next day it was clear that he was suffering from some mental trouble—aphasia and paralysis set in—he was taken back to Brussels and installed in a sanatorium there, but it was the beginning of the end. His mother came to Brussels to nurse her son, and found that he needed tending, to use her own words, 'as quite a little child.' In the beginning of July 1866 she and Alfred Stevens brought back to Paris a Baudelaire who was less than the ghost of his former self. Baudelaire in his last years is one of the most tragic figures in all literary history. Deprived of memory, wasted and changed to the extent of being unable to recognise himself in a mirror, for him, who had boasted that the inexpressible did not exist, who was in truth a 'lord of language,' now unable to express his simplest thoughts, for him indeed death could only bring consolation in releasing him from his suffering in September 1867.

Before passing on to consider the philosophy of Baudelaire's work we would point out that this philosophy is the outcome of three elements—his nature, his education, and his age.

By nature Baudelaire is above all the man of sensation. Unhappily we have no *medical* documents here. At that time no one studied a writer from this point of view—as has been done since (for example, Dr. Toudouze's study of Emile Zola). But perhaps after all his poems are as weighty documents as a doctor's diagnosis. And these reveal an excessively, even unhealthily, sensitive nature.

We have also the testimony of his contemporaries and critics who tell us that Baudelaire's nerves were extraordinarily acute, and that his faculty of smell was developed to the highest point. Some of his most famous lines are written on the subject of perfumes:—

'Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
—Et d'autres corrompus, riches et triomphants,
Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.'

and these:—

'Il est de forts parfums pour qui toute matière
Est poreuse. On dirait qu'ils pénètrent le verre.
En ouvrant un coffret venu de l'orient
Dont la serrure grince et rechigne en criant,
Ou dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
Pleine de l'âcre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire,
Parfois on trouve un vieux flacon qui se souvient
D'où jaillit toute vive une âme qui revient.'

It is the desire for sensation again that leads him to take refuge in what he himself describes as the *paradis artificiels* of opium.

Those who seek in Baudelaire's pages supernatural visions such as those of De Quincey or of Poe will be dis-

appointed. The *paradis artificiels* contain little beside the account of De Quincey's experience and life.

He does, indeed, describe his own experiences of hashish, telling us how

'colours will take on an unusual energy and enter into the brain with victorious intensity. The paintings on ceilings, whether they be delicate, mediocre, or even bad, will be clothed with fearful life; the most crudely painted papers on a hotel wall will hollow themselves into magnificent dioramas. Nymphs with dazzling flesh look at you with their great eyes that are more profound than sky or water; the characters of antiquity, muffled up in their sacerdotal or military garb, by means of a simple look exchange the most solemn confidences with you. In the meanwhile, there develops that mysterious and temporary state of mind wherein the profoundness of life, studded with its countless difficulties, is revealed in the spectacle, be it never so trivial, one has before one's eyes: in which the nearest object becomes a speaking symbol. Fourier and Swedenborg, the former with his *analogies*, the latter with his *correspondances* incarnated themselves in the vegetable and animal which meets your eyes, and instead of teaching by the voice they inculcate their doctrine by means of form and colour. . . . Hashish then spreads itself over the whole of life like a magic varnish, painting it in solemn colours and lighting up all its depths.'

Or as he expressed it in one of his poems :—

'L'opium agrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,
Allonge l'illimité,
Approfondit le temps, creuse la volupté,
Et de plaisirs noirs et mornes
Remplit l'âme au delà de sa capacité.'

Secondly, by nature Baudelaire is the Parisian sceptic with Catholic upbringing, and the contest between these two contrasted lines of tendency forms one of the salient features of his work. The best proof of this is the feeling, not of indifference, but of disgust produced in any Calvinistic mind whenever the name of Baudelaire is pronounced. Such see in him an agent of Satan escaped from a modern Babylon. They do not understand him,

and yet were they but acquainted with his theory of original sin, would they not judge otherwise?

There is no theory more dear to Baudelaire's heart than that of original sin. In a letter to Toussenel he wrote :—

'Speaking of original sin, I have often thought harmful, loathsome animals are perhaps nothing other than the vivification, embodiment, and dawning into material life of man's *evil thoughts*. In this way the whole of nature participates in original sin.'

And in his *Art Romantique* (*Éloge du Maquillage*) we read :—

'Review, analyse all that is natural, you will find nothing that is not horrible. Everything fine and noble is the product of reason and calculation. Crime, for which the human animal acquired a taste in his mother's womb, is originally natural.'

Everywhere his eyes were met by the 'tedious spectacle of immortal sin.' He believed firmly in the *natural* impulse which leads to actions well known by the perpetrator to be wrong, and therefore fascinating. The prose poem *Le Mauvais Vitrier* is a good example of Baudelaire's treatment of the theme of the *Imp of the Perverse*. In this way, too, woman, who is far more a creature of natural impulse than of reason, calls down all the wrath of Baudelaire, who calls her 'natural, that is to say, abominable.'

At the same time, the idea of the Virgin is ever present, bringing with her the atmosphere of the ideal world.

'Elle se répand dans ma vie
Comme un air parfumé de sel,
Et dans mon âme inassouvie
Verse le goût de l'Éternel.'

And nature takes on the aspect of the Catholic ceremonial :—

'—chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir,'

or

'le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir !'

Then there is the contrasting mood — the mood of libertinage, where he shows himself preoccupied with the questions of the flesh. As La Bruyère has said: 'Les dévots ne connaissent de crimes que l'incontinence.' And Baudelaire painted vice, with its attraction (in accordance with his theory), but also, since he knew that

> 'The Gods are just and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us'

with its consequences, even as he described the after-effects of opium.

And withal the analyst in him is ever on the alert; his highest ecstasy never destroys the analysing faculty. We have already seen, in the Madame Sabatier episode, how the truth of that wise remark 'our doubts are traitors' applies to Baudelaire, and in his poems we find fresh proofs of the fact that the analysing spirit in Baudelaire is, by its very power, his worst enemy.

He furnishes a proof of that passage of Guy de Maupassant, who says:—

> 'A simple feeling no longer exists in the man of letters. Everything he sees, his joys, pleasures, sufferings, and despair, all become instantly subjects for observation. In spite of everything, in spite of himself, he is for ever analysing hearts, faces, gestures, voice intonations. . . . He lives under the sentence of being a continual reflection of himself and others, under the sentence of watching himself feel, act, love, think, or suffer, and of never suffering, thinking, loving, feeling like any one else honestly, frankly, simply, without self-analysis after every joy or every sob.'

We have already mentioned Baudelaire's tireless curiosity, his resolution to miss nothing of what Paris could offer to his observation.

> 'J'étais comme l'enfant avide du spectacle,
> Haïssant le rideau comme on hait un obstacle.'

And this curiosity gave him no peace—forced him, as it were, to further observation. As he himself says,

'La curiosité nous tourmente et nous roule,
Comme un Ange cruel qui fouette des soleils.'

The *Tableaux Parisiens* are the fruit of this curiosity. In his poems in prose he describes the power of this feeling in him :—

'Once I happened to follow for hours a poor old woman who was in trouble. . . . She was evidently forced by her absolute solitude to habits like those of an old bachelor, and the masculine character of her ways lent a mysterious piquancy to their austerity. I know not in what miserable café she had breakfasted, nor how. I followed her to the reading-room, and I watched her for a long time while she sought among the papers with eager eyes, once tear-scalded, news of some great personal interest. In the end—in the afternoon, under a charming autumn sky, one of those skies from which a host of recollections and regrets descend, she sat in a garden, far from the crowd, to listen to one of those concerts with which regimental music charms Parisian people.

'Doubtless this is the little debauch of that innocent (or purified) old woman, this is her well-earned consolation for one of those tedious days without a friend, without a pleasant talk, without a confidant, that God allows to fall to her lot—perhaps for years now—three hundred and sixty-five times a year.'

This is the 'Petites Vieilles' of the *Fleurs du Mal*—that poem into which (Baudelairian though it be) passes a note of Villon :—

'Dans les plis sinueux des vieilles capitales,
Où tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements,
Je guette, obéissant à mes humeurs fatales,
Des êtres singuliers, décrépits et charmants.
Ces monstres disloqués furent jadis des femmes,
Eponine ou Laïs !—Monstres brisés, bossus
Ou tordus, aimons-les ! Ce sont encor des âmes.
. . . . . .
Ah ! que j'en ai suivi, de ces petites vieilles !
Une entre autres, à l'heure où le soleil tombant
Ensanglante le ciel de blessures vermeilles,
Pensive s'asseyait à l'écart sur un banc,

Pour entendre un de ces concerts, riches de cuivre,
Dont les soldats parfois inondent nos jardins,
Et qui, dans ces soirs d'or où l'on se sent revivre,
Versent quelque héroïsme au cœur des citadins. . . .
. . . . . .
Telles vous cheminez, stoïques et sans plaintes,
A travers le chaos des vivantes cités,
Mères au cœur saignant, courtisanes ou saintes,
Dont autrefois les noms par tous étaient cités.

Vous qui fûtes la grâce ou qui fûtes la gloire,
Nul ne vous reconnaît ! un ivrogne incivil
Vous insulte en passant d'un amour dérisoire ;
Sur vos talons gambade un enfant lâche et vil.

Honteuses d'exister, ombres ratatinées,
Peureuses, le dos bas, vous côtoyez les murs ;
Et nul ne vous salue, étranges destinées !
Débris d'humanité pour l'éternité mûrs !'

And of the same class is the poem 'Les Aveugles'; the eyes of the Blind

'—restent levés
Au ciel ; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés
Pencher rêveusement leur tête appesantie.

Il traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité !
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris, et beugles,

Eprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,
Vois, je me traîne aussi ! mais plus qu'eux hébété,
Je dis : Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles ?'

But together with the analyst a kind of stoic appears. Baudelaire never spoke of himself—we have the testimony of his contemporaries for that; it would have been against his principles to let his sufferings be seen. As he says in 'Le Dandy':—

'The character of the dandy's beauty lies above all in that cold bearing which comes from a steadfast determination not to be moved; it is like a latent fire which suggests its presence, and which could glow, but will not.'

It is this attitude which explains Baudelaire's development of the 'art-for-art' theory, to add to it that detached 'aristocratic' element.

First of all, then, he lays down the 'art-for-art' theory, rigorously banishing any idea of didacticism :—

'The more art would aim at being philosophically clear, the more will it degrade itself and return to the childish hieroglyphic; on the other hand, the more art detaches itself from teaching, the nearer will it attain to pure disinterested beauty.

'A great many people believe that the aim of poetry is some kind of teaching, that poetry should at one moment fortify conscience, at another perfect morals, or at any rate prove something useful. . . . Poetry has no other aim than Herself; can have no other; and no poetry will be so great, noble, and truly worthy of the name of poem as that written for the mere pleasure of writing a poem. Let me be well understood. I do not mean to say that poetry cannot ennoble morals: that its final result may not be to raise man above the level of vulgar interests: that would be evidently absurd. I do say that if the poet has pursued some moral aim, it is no imprudence to predict that his work will be bad.

'Poetry, under pain of death or decay, cannot assimilate herself to science or ethics; she has not Truth for object, she has only Herself.'

Later on in his article on Charles Dupont he exclaims: 'Didacticism in poetry is a great sign of laziness,' and he continues :—

'It is at once by and through poetry, by and through music, that the soul catches a glimpse of the splendours situated behind the tomb, and when an exquisite poet brings tears to the eyes, these tears are not the sign of excessive delight, they are far rather the mark of an excited melancholy, of a postulation of the nerves, a nature exiled in imperfection, and which longs to gain immediate possession, on this very earth, of the revealed paradise.

'Thus, the principle of poetry is strictly and simply human aspiration towards a superior Beauty, and the manifestation of this principle lies in an enthusiasm, an uplifting of the soul; enthusiasm which is quite independent of passion, which is the intoxication of the heart, and of truth which is the pasturage of reason. For passion is a *natural* thing, too natural even not to introduce a harsh,

discordant note into the domain of pure Beauty; too familiar and too violent not to scandalise the pure Desires, gracious Melancholy, and noble Despair, which dwell in the supernatural realms of Poetry.'

Sainte-Beuve criticised this attitude in a letter to Baudelaire where he writes :—

'Let me give you a piece of advice which would be very surprising to those who do not know you. You are too afraid of passion—it is a theory with you. You make too much concession to management. Let yourself alone, do not fear to feel as others feel, never be afraid to be too ordinary.'

It is sound advice. When Baudelaire expressed his admiration for 'the great spirits who spurn reality,' what he despised was not so much reality as the commonplace, and it was this that led to his excessive love of artifice.

Yet Baudelaire did perceive the danger lurking in the 'art-for-art' theory, even though it was only in passing humour that he wrote :—

'Immoderate taste for *form* leads to monstrous, unknown disorders. . . . The frenzied passion of art is a canker which devours all else, and the frank absence of the just and true in art comes to the same as the absence of art, the whole man vanishes; the specialisation of one faculty leads to nothingness. I understand the fury of iconoclast and mussulman against images. I realise the remorse of Saint Augustine for excessive joy of the eye. The danger is so great that I excuse the suppression of the object.'

The knowledge of the danger saddens him; he sees 'irresistible night establishing her empire,' after the romantic sunset, and he adds :—

'Literature must go to recruit its forces in a better atmosphere. The time is not far off when it will be understood that all literature which refuses to walk fraternally between science and philosophy is a homicidal, suicidal, literature.'

Baudelaire's ideal beauty is not simple, but rather that in which some mystery and some sadness is incorporated.

'J'ai trouvé la définition du Beau, de mon Beau,' he writes in his *Fusées* :—

'It is something fervent but sad, something rather vague, leaving room for conjecture. If you permit, I will apply my ideas to a sensible object, for example, to that most interesting object in society, a woman's face. A seductive, beautiful head, a woman's head I mean, is a head that gives rise, in some confused way, to dreams at once voluptuous and sad; it brings with it a hint of melancholy, of lassitude, of satiety even—or else the contrary idea, that is to say, an ardour, a desire of life associated with a bitterness like the ebb-tide from privation or hopelessness. Mystery, regret, are also characteristics of the Beautiful. . . . I do not mean to say that Joy cannot associate with Beauty, but I do say that Joy is one of her most vulgar ornaments. While Melancholy is, so to speak, her noble companion, and so much so that I can scarcely conceive of a type of Beauty where there is not some Unhappiness.'

He expressed the same idea in the famous 'Madrigal Triste' :—

'Que m'importe que tu sois sage?
Sois belle! et sois triste! les pleurs
Ajoutent un charme au visage,
Comme le fleuve au paysage;
L'orage rajeunit les fleurs.

Je t'aime surtout quand la joie
S'enfuit de ton front terrassé;
Quand ton cœur dans l'horreur se noie;
Quand sur ton présent se déploie
Le nuage affreux du passé.'

An almost inseparable attribute of this beauty is Horror :—

'Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté, dont tu te moques,
De tes bijoux l'Horreur n'est pas le moins charmant,
Et le Meurtre, parmi tes plus chers breloques,
Sur ton ventre orgueilleux danse amoureusement.'

and again :—

'Ce qu'il faut à ce cœur profond comme un abîme,
C'est vous, Lady Macbeth, âme puissante au crime,
Rêve d'Eschyle éclos au climat des antans.

Ou bien toi, grande Nuit, fille de Michel-Ange,
Qui tors paisiblement dans une pose étrange
Tes appas façonnés aux bouches des Titans.'

This taste has its foundation in that desire to astonish or to mystify, which is one of the ruling traits of Baudelaire's character. It is, however, a feature common to so many of the young romantics that it cannot be called exclusively Baudelairian. It was the same desire to *épater le bourgeois* which made Théophile Gautier bring out his famous *Gilet rouge*, which led Petrus Borel to adopt his startling costume, and produced such startling names as Philothée O'Neddy, or a host of other pleasant extravagances.

Certainly Baudelaire carried the taste for mystification somewhat far, as when he ordered a certain blue coat, and then when that was finished ordered a dozen like it 'just to astonish the tailor.' It was the same impulse that led him to tell astounding stories about himself merely to shock his hearers. In his *Salon* of 1859, he said :—

'The desire to astonish and to be astonished is a very legitimate one. The whole question is to know by what means you wish to create or feel astonishment. Because the Beautiful is *always* astonishing it would be absurd to suppose that what is astonishing is *always* beautiful. Now, our public which is singularly powerless to feel the happiness of reverie or admiration (sign of small minds) wants to be astonished by means foreign to art, and artists obediently conform to its taste; they seek to strike it, surprise it, stupefy it by unworthy stratagems, because they know it incapable of feeling ecstasy before the natural tactics of true art.'

Just so. And Baudelaire in his desire to *épater le bourgeois* went too far, and we rather sympathise with the remark of that man who, seeing Baudelaire making his way homeward one night, observed to his companion, 'There goes Baudelaire; I 'll wager he 's going to bed to-night *under* the bed instead of *in* it—just to astonish it.'

Let us then pass on now—having studied the characteristics of which Baudelairian philosophy is the outcome—to consider the philosophy itself.

Professional philosophers are unwilling to admit that a poet may be a philosopher. A man who does not make use of the approved scholastic dialectic methods appears to them little else than a heretic entering the holy of holies.

Let us acknowledge at once that Baudelaire never posed as a philosopher. He put the best of himself into his poems in prose or verse, and the two collections of his reflections *Fusées* and *Mon Cœur mis à nu* cannot be compared to that profound *Journal* of Alfred de Vigny.

But if, as Nietzsche has it, the philosopher is he who gives a new meaning to the universe, Baudelaire has certainly a claim to be accounted a philosopher.

For Nietzsche, as M. Lichtenberger[1] points out, nothing in Nature is of worth in itself: the world of reality is only indifferent matter which has no interest apart from that which we ourselves lend it. In this way the true philosopher is that man whose personality is strong enough to create a world which interests mankind. Now, has not Baudelaire created just that—a world which interests mankind—a world which is disconcerting, mysterious and sorrowful, a world in which an intellectual epicureanism combines with true stoicism and catholic mysticism, a world in which so many souls have lived, a world which would seem the living triumph of will.

From this point of view Baudelaire seems to be the hero that Nietzsche[2] called for, he who brings new

[1] *La philosophie de Nietzsche.*

[2] After this book was finished our attention was called to an article on Baudelaire in the *Nineteenth Century* (March 1911) by M. André Beaunier. We cannot do better than refer our readers to this delightfully written study. M. Beaunier seems to have arrived at the same conclusion as ourselves when he says, unfortunately only *en passant:* 'Faire sa volupté de son tourment, il y a là du Nietzschéisme.'

passions, new desires, and puts new value into everything. We will go further.

Baudelaire's ideas looked at in the light of Nietzsche's philosophy take on a singular refulgence, and, under the rays of the German thinker's ideas, reflect such curious lights that we will venture to compare the two writers.

A certain resemblance is at once perceptible between Nietzsche's philosophy, which makes ceaseless effort to raise oneself above oneself the great task imposed on the will, and Baudelairism, which is founded above all on the will being always strained to despise feelings which are the outcome of pure nature.

No poetry is more *conscious* than that of Baudelaire, and this is an important point since critics have portrayed Baudelaire as a kind of opium-eater incapable of self-command. In his Preface to the translation of Poe's 'Raven' he wrote:—

'Poetics, we are told, are made and modelled in accordance with poems. Here is a poet who maintains that his poem has been composed in accordance with his theory of poetics. Certainly he had great genius and more inspiration than any one else, if by inspiration is understood energy, intellectual enthusiasm, and the power of keeping the faculties awake. But he also loved work more than others; he liked to repeat, he who was so perfectly original, that originality was a matter of apprenticeship, which does not mean that it is something transmitted by teaching. Chance and the incomprehensible were his two great enemies. Did he, by some strange amusing vanity, make himself out less inspired than he was naturally? Did he diminish the gratuitous faculty which was in him to show the part of will the finer? I should be rather inclined to believe it; though at the same time it must not be forgotten that his genius, ardent, active as it was, had a passionate love of analysis, intrigue and calculation. One of his favourite axioms was this: "Everything in a poem, just as in a novel, should tend towards the dénouement. A good author has already got his last line in his head when he writes his first." Thanks to this admirable method, the composer can begin his work at the end and work when he likes

at any part of it. Amateurs of delirium will perhaps be revolted by these cynical maxims: but each can take as much of them as he will. It will always be good to show them what advantages art can draw from deliberation, and to make men of the world see how much toil is exacted by that luxury called poetry.'

He had already touched on this subject in his *Salon* of 1859, where he says:—

'There is no chance in art, any more than in mechanics. A happy discovery is simply the consequence of a good piece of reasoning with the intermediate deductions passed over, just as a mistake is the result of false reasoning.'

And as regards the inspiration of opium, he has finely said:—

'But man is not so cut off from honest means of gaining heaven to need to invoke pharmacy and sorcery, he has no need to sell his soul to pay for intoxicating caresses and the friendship of houris. What is that paradise bought at the price of eternal salvation?'

But the important point to remark is that the Nietzschean morality, just as the art of Baudelaire, rests above all upon sensation. For Nietzsche sensation is the 'scales, the weights and the weigher,' that is—everything.

As M. Jules de Gaultier well puts it:—

'The being (that is the being in itself) only reveals itself partially to consciousness, it remains mysterious in its origin and in its end. The part of itself it allows to be realised is revealed in *sensation*. Sensation, as regards consciousness, is the penumbra out of which rises the external world.'

Doubtless, if Baudelaire had been asked what was sensation he would have expressed himself somewhat differently, and in less scholastic terms. But would he not also have declared that, in his eyes, sensation was all-important, that we must continually subtilise those we experience, or better still, create new ones, marking meanwhile the delicate connections between those of hearing, sight, and smell?

No poet before Baudelaire had brought so many new sensations into literary style.

In the classical ages the mind hides as much as possible from the commerce of the senses, sensation in the intellect's crucible becomes abstract sentiment. But in Baudelaire, on the contrary, sensation passes through his mind to settle, all quivering on the page before him, like a butterfly which the writer has surprised as it flew, and through whose frail body he hesitates in his happiness to drive a pin.

And in this way Baudelaire was really the first of the impressionists.[1] Herein, too, he was merely following his nature, for he seems to have been a wonderful receptacle for sensation. Think how he speaks of perfumes, dividing them into three classes according as they call up different ideas, sensations, or recollections.

And his interest in drinks and poisons, what is it if not the very instinct of the 'man of sensation' in pursuit of what he has not yet felt? Sensation is of capital importance, since it brings an escape from the oppressiveness of reality.

'One must ever be drunken. Everything is in that; it is the only question. In order not to feel the horrible burden of Time that is breaking your shoulders, bending you earthwards, you must be ceaselessly drunken.

'But with what? With wine, poetry, or virtue, as you will—only intoxicate yourself; and if sometimes, on the steps of a palace, or the green sward of a grave, or in the mournful solitude of your room you wake to find the intoxication diminished or vanished, ask of the wind, or the wave, or the star, or the bird, or the clock, or all that flies, all that groans, all that rolls on, all that sings, all that speaks, ask what time it is; and the wind, wave, star, bird and clock will tell you: "It is time to be drunken." Lest you should be the martyred slaves of Time, be ceaselessly drunken! With wine, poetry or virtue, as you will.'

[1] We shall return to this point when we come to study the Baudelairian spirit in Painting.

And whence comes the magic of his verse if not from this pursuit of the inexpressible? He penetrates into sensation to the utmost limit, then, as Barbey d'Aurevilly says, hurls himself against that mysterious gate of the Infinite which he cannot open, and in his rage turns on language and exhausts his fury there.

And let us acknowledge that out of this he produced wonderful effects, was able to present objects to us, to express feelings which till then defied description.

Can we ever forget that marvellous sonnet, perhaps the most profound ever written, 'Correspondances':—

> 'La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
> Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent . . .' etc.

What sonnet, or rather what thought, was ever more fertile in consequences? When could philosophy boast of having renewed the inspiration of prosody—and painting—as this theory has done?

Do not our modern painters make use of a musical terminology? And is not one of their cherished ideas that of having made progress like that of the symphonic orchestra: 'enriching itself, embroidering itself, ceaselessly complicating itself at the expense of precise outline.'[1]

Looking at the canvas of one or other of the modern painters there is one word which rises irresistibly to our lips—*symphony*. We have only to think of certain pictures of Whistler, where a grey note is supported by united harmonies of the same tone.[2]

[1] Raymond Bouyer.

[2] 'Is it by some fatality of decadence that to-day every art shows a desire to encroach upon its sister art, that painters introduce musical scales into painting,

Take, for example, the portrait of Miss Alexander, a little fair-headed girl, holding a grey felt hat on a panel of amber-coloured grey supported by the pure black of the wall, a piece of virtuoso execution in the scales of grey and silver! And such pictures are legion. And then think of the so-called 'verlibriste' poetry, the breaking up of traditional metres, an instrumentation which is at every moment varied, contrasted, disconcerting.

This Revolution is doubtless not due to a single man, yet might it not justly have inscribed upon its banner the sonnet of Baudelaire?

The pursuit of sensation must necessarily lead to what Baudelaire calls *dégoût de la vie—extase de la vie.* An attitude Nietzschean *par excellence.*

Dégoût de la vie. No man ever felt it more than Nietzsche; for was he not at first a fervid disciple of that greatest of pessimists, Schopenhauer?

But, the influence of Schopenhauer admitted, what does it explain? We accept only these doctrines which already exist forcibly in ourselves, or, as Nietzsche said, 'there is no philosophy that is not supported by a state of mind which is the outcome of our instincts.' And the pessimism of the nineteenth-century French writers is such a common trait that we may call it almost instinctive—they seem to have imbibed it from infancy. Baudelaire is perhaps the greatest pessimist of his pessimistic nation. As such too, he has portrayed himself in his work; he took pleasure in describing his soul's darkness to us:—

> 'Mon âme est un tombeau que, mauvais cénobite,
> Depuis l'éternité je parcours et j'habite,
> Rien n'embellit les murs de ce cloître odieux!'

---

sculptors colour into sculpture, men of letters plastic devices into literature, and other artists a kind of encyclopædic philosophy into plastic art itself?'

And it comes to pass that

'. . . la terre est changée en un cachot humide
Où l'Espérance, comme une chauve-souris,
S'en va battant les murs de son aile timide
Et se cognant la tête à des plafonds pourris.
. . . . . .
Et de longs corbillards, sans tambours ni musique,
Défilent lentement dans mon âme ; l'Espoir
Vaincu, pleure, et l'Angoisse atroce, despotique,
Sur mon crâne inclinée plante son drapeau noir.'

We could multiply indefinitely quotations of this sort. Finally his pessimism grows so deep that he knows not where he shall turn, and his soul becomes *une vieille gabare sans mâts sur une mer monstrueuse et sans bords*, and hope deserts him :—

'L'irrésistible Nuit établit son empire,
Noire, humide, funeste et pleine de frissons ;
Une odeur de tombeau dans les ténèbres nage,
Et mon pied peureux froisse, au bord du marécage
Des crapauds imprévus et de froids limaçons.'

The same idea recurs over and over again. Take, for example, the close of 'L'Irréparable' :—

'J'ai vu parfois, au fond d'un théâtre banal
Qu'enflammait l'orchestre sonore,
Une fée allumer dans un ciel infernal
Une miraculeuse aurore ;
J'ai vu parfois au fond d'un théâtre banal

Un être, qui n'était que lumière, or et gaze
Terrasser l'énorme Satan ;
Mais mon cœur, que jamais ne visite l'extase,
Est un théâtre où l'on attend
Toujours, toujours en vain, l'Être aux ailes de gaze' ;

or that wonderful piece from 'Spleen' (No. LXXVIII.), where he describes himself as having lost even his curiosity, beginning :—

'J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans. . . .
Rien n'égale en longueur les boiteuses journées,
Quand sous les lourds flocons des neigeuses années

L'Ennui, fruit de la morne incuriosité,
Prend les proportions de l'immortalité';

or this :—

'Nous avons vu partout et sans l'avoir cherché,
Du haut jusqu'en bas de l'échelle fatale,
Le spectacle ennuyeux de l'immortel péché :
La femme, esclave vile orgueilleuse et stupide,
Sans rire s'adorant, et s'aimant sans dégoût,
L'homme, tyran goulu, paillard dur et cupide,
Esclave de l'esclave et ruisseau dans l'égout ;

Le bourreau qui jouit, le martyr qui sanglote,
La fête qu'assaisonne et parfume le sang ;
Le poison du pouvoir énervant le despote,
Et le peuple amoureux du fouet abrutissant ;

Plusieurs religions semblables à la nôtre,
Toutes escaladant le ciel ; la Sainteté,
Comme en un lit de plume un délicat se vautre
Dans les clous et le crin cherchant la volupté.

L'Humanité bavarde, ivre de son génie,
Et, folle maintenant comme elle était jadis,
Criant à Dieu, dans sa furibonde agonie :
"O mon semblable, O mon maître, je te maudis !"

Et les moins sots, hardis amants de la Démence,
Fuyant le grand troupeau parqué par le Destin,
Et se réfugiant dans l'opium immense !
—Tel est du globe entier l'éternel bulletin.

Amer savoir, celui qu'on tire du voyage !
Le monde, monotone et petit, aujourd'hui
Hier, demain, toujours, nous fait voir notre image
Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui. . . .'

But the fact which constitutes Baudelaire's originality, and which brought about Nietzsche's success, is that both celebrated *the beauty of life.* 'Extase de la vie,' writes Baudelaire after saying 'dégoût de la vie,' just as in Nietzsche seeing the world in beauty saves him from pessimism and engenders his love of life: 'And thus spake I often to myself for consolation: "Courage! be

of good cheer, old heart! An unhappiness has failed to befall thee: enjoy that as thy happiness."'

Is not this just what Baudelaire did, not only when he rejoiced in his unhappiness as in happiness, but when, thanks to it, he drew fresh sounds from the 'new thrills of his lyre'?

For Nietzsche, as for Baudelaire, beauty can redeem all sorrow. It is this point of view which gave birth to Nietzsche's conception of the spirit of Apollo and the spirit of Dionysus, as M. Jules Gaultier has excellently explained in his book *De Kant à Nietzsche.* And it is this point of view which made Baudelaire write his wonderful sonnet 'Vie Antérieure' (J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques), and 'La Géante' and 'Le Balcon,' and so many charming prose poems where the author of 'La Charogne' celebrates life for its own sake.

Just as Nietzsche attributes to the Greeks a certain mental attitude which he calls the union of the Apollonian and Dionysian spirit, so it pleases us to find in Baudelaire the pessimist conception of life leading to a dream of beauty.

The Greek, says Nietzsche, knew suffering, but surmounted it by the creation of art. Between reality which wounds him and his own sensitiveness, he places the world of beautiful forms, the world of beautiful verse—the Apollonian world. But the Greeks went further: under the dominion of a divine intoxication man feels his identity with the whole universe, and in the joys he feels at such a discovery he offers up a hymn to Dionysus. Thus Dionysian art in making him understand the identity of spectacle and spectator has justified life in his eyes.

Thus suffering becomes joy, and the phenomenon makes itself felt before every tragic drama.

We have not to discuss here whether Nietzsche's theory in its application to the Greeks be true or false; but it

certainly holds in application to Baudelaire. The poet understands that art is the great consoler, and while decrying life for its cruelty, at the same time celebrates it for its beauty, *celebrates it because it is life.*

Take the piece called 'Soleil'—here we are in absolute Nietzscheanism.

A ray of sunshine strikes across town and fields. The poet has gone in search of ideas, and at first he sees only the closed shutters which lend an air of suspicion to the houses—he loses himself in a maze of dark, dank streets, where the houses look evil and diseased. But is not the poet like the sun which deifies all, shining alike on slum or temple, shedding its golden glory on the dunghill and on the flowers.

Do we not see here the birth of the 'art for art' theory in the poet's soul?

In truth, when we come to reflect about this subject, we find nothing is more interesting than these two minds, the one French, the other German, both seeing life in sorrowful light, then both transforming their philosophic feelings into æsthetic feelings, eager to prolong the spectacle, and to describe it, and while maintaining a profound disgust of life at the same time adoring it in that it is life. And the two minds destined to tread the same path arrive inevitably at the same resting-place of thought.

The one will say :—

'La volupté unique et suprême de l'amour gît dans la certitude de faire le mal—et l'homme et la femme savent de naissance que dans le mal se trouve toute volupté.'

(If Nietzsche had written that how admirable it would have been considered!)

The other will say to men: 'Harden yourselves,' or :—

'I am very glad to see the miracles which the warm sun brings

forth: such are tigers, and palm-trees, and rattlesnakes. Also amongst men there is a beautiful brood of the warm sun, and much that is marvellous in the wicked.'

And might we not quote here that magnificent 'Don Juan aux Enfers,' with all its tragic grandeur, and which so many superficial readers have despised, untouched by all the Nietzschean philosophy of the poem—the *amor fati* before which Nietzsche bows down.

Strange as a comparison between Baudelaire and Nietzsche may seem at first sight, the strangeness tends more and more to disappear when we remember another point of agreement between the two writers: the horror in which they both hold the encyclopædic and revolutionary spirit: 'So speaketh justice *unto me*,' says Zarathoustra; 'men are not equal and neither shall they become so! What would be my love of the Superman if I spoke otherwise?'

And Gautier tells us of Baudelaire that he had 'a perfect horror of progressivists, utilitarians, humanitarians, Utopists.'

Baudelaire wrote in a letter to Arcelle:—

'With the exception of Chateaubriand, Balzac, Stendhal, Mérimée, de Vigny, Flaubert, Banville, Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, all the modern rabble inspire me with horror. Virtue with horror. Vice with horror. Fluent style with horror. *Progress with horror.*'

And he returns to the question of progress in a characteristic note on Laclos: 'Have morals improved? No, energy for wickedness has grown less. And stupidity has taken the place of wit.'

'This is a great deal of metaphysics for an introduction,' writes Gautier in his Preface; 'but Baudelaire's was a subtle, complicated, reasoning, paradoxical nature, and more philosophical than is generally that of poets.'

We will stop—lest a desire of forcing comparisons too far should lead to falsity.

Having seen the unjust contempt with which certain pedants would overwhelm the ideas of Baudelaire, we have found pleasure in comparing him with the philosopher who is most in vogue at this moment.

When we come to think upon it, we see that life, varied as it may seem, turns ever on the same round, and the same conditions of mind reappear across the centuries.

There remains always, however, a fairly great difference between Nietzsche and Baudelaire: Nietzsche declared war to the knife on Christianity, in which he saw a religion of slaves ; Baudelaire, on the other hand, saw in Catholicism the only doctrine that could render the universe intelligible. Nietzsche, in virtue of his atavism and his education, always took *renunciation* as the typical Christian action ; his philosophy, and above all, his pathological condition led him towards the end of his life to make the *instinct of greatness* the principle of all morality, and thus he could not do otherwise than condemn the Christianity surrounding him.

Quite different is the position of Baudelaire. In the first place, without any strong positive beliefs, like every Parisian, he was led by his moral preoccupation to attach a very high importance to the conditions—healthy, or unhealthy—of the human being, or, let us say to those morbid conditions into which vice leads him.

'Impiety does not exist in Baudelaire's nature; he oelieves in a superior form of mathematics established by God from all time, whose least infringement is followed by the hardest punishments. . . . With Baudelaire sin is always followed by remorse, anguish, disgust, despair, and is punished by itself, which is the greatest suffering.'[1]

Remorse, disenchantment, mental anguish are facts as real as any battle—indeed more real in the eyes of the

[1] Théophile Gautier. Preface.

psychologist,—carrying with them more incalculable consequences.

Every writer who takes an interest in the human personality is led inevitably into ethics; we have only to think of Taine setting out with an entirely negative philosophic conception, but at the end of his life admitting the reality of virtue and vice, and asking to be given a religious burial.

After all, what matters it whether the philosophy of Baudelaire be profound or superficial? We shall still be attracted by the bitter-sweet fruit of his poems. Shall we go to them to find precepts of life, or a picture of the decadence of the second Empire, or a healing for our suffering?

What gives these poems their magic—their more than magic, their deep life, is that in them a human soul reveals itself—a soul which is tormented, unsatisfied, sinning, but always in 'correspondence' with Heaven—just as Baudelaire wished it.

His irony, his misanthropy, his pessimism only serve to make us understand from what heights the poet must have fallen.

Doubtless we should have liked to think that towards the evening of his life he freed himself from the bands of opium, hashish and alcohol. Yet who knows? Cured, would he have composed his masterpieces? Better still, who knows but that through him certain minds have not arrived at a surer conception of their obligations? Who shall pronounce on either success or happiness save *ἐν βιοῦ τελείῳ*?

At the outset of this study we declared that Baudelaire's marvellous style would suffice to explain his influence.

We must confess also that the last thirty years of the nineteenth century have played a considerable part in propagating him.

The age to which we refer is in one way a literary reaction against science : it worships the mysterious, and therefore Baudelaire was bound to please since he seemed the very exorciser of reality.

Two great wants in turn have ruled nineteenth-century French literature : the need of science and the need of the ideal. The latter dominates at the beginning of the nineteenth century—Chateaubriand is its choir-master. Then from 1840-80 there appeared the positivists, the realists, the naturalists ; all those—call them what you will—worship Science, with Taine as their director.

Sainte-Beuve wrote at the end of his articles on Madame Bovary :—

'In many places, and under diverse forms I think I recognise new literary signs : science, spirit of observation, force, some hardness even. Such are the characteristics which seem to distinguish the front-rank men of the new generation. Son of, and brother of distinguished doctors, M. Gustave Flaubert holds the pen as others the scalpel. Anatomists and physiologists, I find you everywhere !'

When we say that the years 1840-80 mark the reign of the positivist spirit, we do not mean to say that there were no dreamers, no believers, at that time ; we merely mean that this spirit was the spirit of the men who direct the course of minds.

In the same way when we say that from 1870, or from 1880-1900, the desire of the ideal seems uppermost, we only mean that—apart from a few exceptions—the worshippers of science do admit the existence of other things than science.

Now Baudelaire has certainly benefited by this change of temper.

Here again, to be quite exact, we ought to say that the seed sown by an original thinker, even when it falls on stony ground, is not choked ; on the contrary, it creates for itself the soil which develops it, like the wallflower

growing in the crevice of a rock and which reproduces itself despite a greedy soil, cruel winds and winters.

Brilliant as was the triumph of science in Baudelaire's age, certain minds brought up in the school of Pascal (that is, realising the limits of the domain of science) felt that even if science banish all idea of mystery from the understanding, it leaves intact the domain of our feelings (Nietzsche would say 'instincts' where we say 'feelings'). For here is something irreducible. You cannot measure a sensation; our 'hinterland' cannot be reduced to a molecular theory.

The philosophy of Herbert Spencer—the last comer—far from completing the triumph of science, on the contrary brought into view more than one crevice in the philosophic edifice. Instead of discovering the secret of things as we had hoped, all that we discovered was the form of a mind, a powerful mind certainly, but human, therefore fallible.

The Spencerian system was too little comprehensive to explain the whole universe. As we feel in us unsatisfied desires, unemployed forces, we conclude that in the universe there is something which must satisfy our desires or set free these forces.

What thinking being worthy of the name has not passed through its curious moments in which life appears to be something ineffable, when the wonder at all its mystery becomes almost painful.

As Browning puts it so well:—

> 'Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,
> A fancy from a flower bell, someone's death,
> A chorus ending from Euripides.
> And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
> As old and new at once as nature's self
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
> Round the ancient idol, on his base again—
> The grand Perhaps!'

Evolutionism and positivism had shut the gates of that great unknown into which we long to penetrate.

It explains nothing to say that such sensations prove the poet's dipsomaniacs or 'superior degenerates'—what matters the cause if the effect is produced?

Better still, when the chosen of a nation arrive at that state which Ravaisson prophesies, where he announces 'the predominance of what might be called a spiritualist realism or positivism, having for generating principle the consciousness which the mind takes in itself of an existence from which it recognises that all other existences are derived, upon which they are dependent, and which is nothing other than its action,'[1] it is clear that the future does not belong to pure materialism.[2]

Long before the philosophers rang the passing bell of empiricism pure and simple, the public—lettered and unlettered—had felt that such a philosophy does not satisfy. To see that this is so we have only to think how man strives with music, poetry, romance, to calm and lull to rest his insatiable instincts.

At the same time, if we desire consolation for reality, yet we also desire fuller knowledge of reality, and ultimate arrival at the domination of reality. These two instincts are united by the love of the marvellous and the desire of

[1] *Ravaisson.* 'Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIXe siècle.'

[2] In order to make this idea plainer, and without wishing to enter upon a philosophical discussion here, we will refer the reader to the following works:—

Bergson, Henri Louis. 'Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience.' Paris, 1889. (English translation by F. L. Pogson, 1910. Bibliographies.)

'L'évolution créatrice.' Paris, 1907.

'Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit.' Paris, 1896.

Maurice Blondel. 'L'action: Essai d'une critique de la vie, et d'une science de la pratique,' 1898. 'Histoire et Dogme,' 1904.

Edouard le Roy. 'Dogme et critique.'

Gaston Wilhaud. 'Essai sur les conditions et les limites de la certitude logique.' Second edition. Paris, 1893.

Emile Boutroux. 'Etudes d'histoire de la philosophie,' 1897. 'Science et Religion dans la philosophie contemporaine,' 1908. (English translation, Jonathan Nield, 1909.)

understanding, and becoming strengthened in their amalgamation create in their turn another desire which is manifested in the success gained by theosophy, by the Russian novel, and finally by the symbolist poetry.

Hindu doctrines came back into favour in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. It was the fashion to be Buddhist, and Jean Lahor (Henri Cazalis) in his very beautiful verse taught us the philosophy of Cakia-Mouni. Even Jules Lemaître, at that time[1] (*quantum mutatus ab illo!*) wrote that Buddhist doctrine was the best salve for healing suffering thought.

Elsewhere, there was quite a renaissance of magic, and M. Peladan, before becoming the excellent art critic he is to-day, modestly called himself Sar Peladan.

Further, Charcot's experiments in hypnotism had shown the way in a direction where many minds went astray, but where M. Pierre Janet has made some very fine discoveries.[2]

Finally, after the articles of M. de Voguë in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the Russian novel, the whole of France began to read the works of Dostoiewski and Tolstoy, charmed with the heroic mysticism with which the works of these two masters are imbued.

Then appeared a perfect pleiad of writers (those writers we are going to consider in this study), who declared that the world as presented by science was too cut and dried, or too stupid. They delighted in seeing the infinite in everything. Some of them went into raptures over the *éternullité du monde*—to use the expression of one of them, Laforgue. Others fled from anarchy to Rome. We are still too close to the movement to be able to pass cool judgment upon it; it is for posterity to pronounce upon the masterpieces which grew up in the shadow of Baudelaire.

[1] 1889.

[2] *Pierre Janet.* 'L'automatisme psychologique: Essai de psychologie expérimentale.' 1889.

PART III

PREDECESSORS

I

EDGAR POE

We have already studied those men who, by reason of the part they play in the circumstances which lead to the development of Baudelairism, may justly be called the predecessors of Baudelaire himself. But there is another class of predecessors (though the two classes are by no means mutually exclusive), those who directly influence the coming writer by their writings. Having endeavoured to present the chief characteristics of Baudelaire's work, we shall now consider to what extent we can trace these characteristics back to his reading.

Of all these predecessors the most original was perhaps Edgar Poe. There is a tendency just now among English and American critics to decry Poe[1]; it is the old story of Tennyson's fable :—

> 'Most can raise the flower now
> For all have got the seed.'

But it should be remembered that Poe did really bring a new element into literature—the element of *artistic* horror. This is something quite apart from the supernatural of Walpole's Castle of Otranto with its sighing portraits and mysterious helmets, or of Mrs. Radcliffe's ghostly machinery, or of 'Monk' Lewis's spirits and demons.

[1] The latest study of Poe by Mr. Arthur Ransome (1910) is an exception to this.

Before Poe the novelists in this department had produced little of any real artistic or literary value.

Poe, in one side of his work, brought to this crude supernatural a psychological and artistic interest, and thereby showed the way to a new and fertile field of literature into which domain Baudelaire was the first to follow.

There are indeed some striking resemblances between Poe and Baudelaire. In the first place, their life is not without analogy. Both had the misfortune to displease their father by choosing a literary career. Both worked in surroundings that were uncongenial to them: Poe in that America which Baudelaire characterised as a 'great gas-lit barbarism'; Baudelaire in Belgium, of which his mildest criticism is that it is a country of fools. Finally, both sought by means of artificial sensation to find relief from oppressive reality. The end of both is tragically sombre: Baudelaire dragging out the two last years of his existence with brain paralysis; Poe falling into the hands of political blackmailers, plied with drink, and carried round from polling-booth to polling-booth, then abandoned in the street. He was discovered next morning, recognised and taken to the hospital, where he died soon after.

The resemblances in the work of the two poets are even stronger. M. Crepet has told us how Baudelaire's enthusiasm grew when once he had begun reading Poe: 'I have rarely seen an enthusiasm so complete, so rapid, so absolute. He would go about asking every new-comer, wherever he were, in the street or a café, or a printing establishment, morning or evening, "Do you know Edgar Poe?" and according to the reply he would either pour out his enthusiasm or shower questions on his hearer.' The reason for this enthusiasm was that in Poe, Baudelaire had discovered a mind very like his own. In a letter to Armand Fraisse of 1858 he says:—

'In 1846 or 1847 I became acquainted with a few fragments of Edgar Poe. I experienced a peculiar emotion; as his complete works were not collected till after his death, I had the patience to make friends with some Americans living in Paris, so as to borrow from them collections of papers that had been edited by Edgar Poe. And then I found—believe me or not, as you will—poems and tales of which I had already a vague, confused and ill-ordered idea, and which Poe had known how to arrange and bring to perfection.'

And six years later, in a letter he wrote to M. Thoré to defend Manet against the charge of having copied Goya, he says:—

'You doubt whether such geometrical parallelisms can present themselves in nature. Well then—I am accused of imitating Edgar Poe! Do you know why I translated Poe with such patience? *Because he was like me.* The first time that I opened a book of his, I saw with terror and delight not only subjects I had dreamed of, but *sentences* that I had thought of, and that he had written twenty years before.'

Let us then now consider the work of these two poets. First, we find in both the same theory of art: that beauty must be considered as an end and not as a means to an end, and with this the hatred of the didactic. This last Poe calls 'a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our poetic literature than all its other enemies combined. . . . It has been assumed tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all poetry is truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral, and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. . . . We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force; but the simple fact is, that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own

souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble than this very poem, this poem *per se*, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake.'

And here is Baudelaire's view :—

'The more art aims at being philosophically clear, the more will it degrade itself, the more will it return towards the state of the infantile hieroglyphic; on the other hand, the more art detaches itself from teaching, the higher it will mount towards pure and disinterested beauty.'—*L'Art Philosophique.*

Speaking of *drames et romans honnêtes* Baudelaire returns again to his subject :—

'Is art useful? Yes. Why? Because it is art. Is there such a thing as harmful art? Yes—that which upsets the conditions of life. Vice is attractive, then you must paint it so; but it drags in its wake its peculiar maladies and sorrows; you must describe them. . . . The first necessary condition of healthy art is the belief in an integral unity. I defy you to find me a single imaginative work which combines all the conditions of the beautiful, and which is a harmful work.'

Like Gautier in this theory, Poe and Baudelaire are like him again in their profession that *l'inexprimable n'existe pas*—Poe speaking of himself as one who

> 'Maintained the power of words—denied that ever
> A thought arose within the human brain
> Beyond the utterance of the human tongue.'

Both Poe and Baudelaire have a decided taste for the horrible. Only here there is a difference; it were better perhaps to say that Poe has a predilection for horror, and Baudelaire for the horrible. Poe in his taste is much more 'popular' than Baudelaire; Poe loved a good thorough-going crime, is led sometimes to descend to the level of the shilling shocker. Many of his tales are written to

merely present a hair-raising situation, a terrifying state of mind—such as the *Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, or *The Black Cat*, with its wealth of nauseous detail.

On this subject much has been said of Baudelaire's 'La Charogne,' which critics compare with Poe's 'Conqueror Worm,' insisting, and rightly, that Baudelaire has here out-Poe'd Poe in horror. But from the fact that a poem of Poe's suggests a poem of the same kind to his successor, it cannot be rigidly deduced that the latter's ideas on the general subject are identical with those of his predecessor. Baudelaire's poem is rather the outcome of his habit of looking at things from Flaubert's point of view, who said: 'I have never looked at a child without thinking that it will grow old, nor can I look on a cradle without thinking of a tomb. To contemplate a woman makes me think of her skeleton.' In this province Baudelaire is the artist, Poe the novelist.

Further. For Baudelaire there is no beauty without some mystery:—

> 'He who looks through an open window,' says Baudelaire, 'never sees so much as he who looks at a closed window. There is no object so profound, so mysterious, so fertile, so dark, so dazzling as a window lit up by a candle. What you can see in the sunshine is always less interesting than what goes on behind a window.'—*Les Fenêtres.*

It is the poetic mystery that attracts Baudelaire. He said in his *Mademoiselle Bistouri*: 'I am passionately fond of a mystery, because I am always in hopes of unravelling it.' Poe, too, hopes to unravel his mystery, but in a different sense from Baudelaire. For Poe 'mystery' means a crime of which the perpetrator is unknown, and whom the novelist has to discover. The offspring of Poe in this region is Sherlock Holmes. In the same way the abstract mystery—the mystery of the universe—has no

hold on Poe. Spiritual philosophy is as absent from his work as the didactic aim. Yet the works of his two greatest disciples, Baudelaire and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, are full of searchings into these very problems.

Baudelaire is urged by his curiosity to go into the public gardens in order to watch *les petites vieilles*, and pursue the reveries they suggest. Poe watches a crowd. A man in it attracts his attention; so active is his curiosity that he follows this man all night, and it is not till morning that he has time to ponder and to see in this man 'the type of genius and deep crime,' and to give up hope of reading in his heart. 'The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the *Hortulus Animæ*; and perhaps it is one of the great mercies of God that this book 'lässt sich nicht lesen!'

This curiosity leading on to dreamy humour is a sign of the ardour with which these two men sought to forget their unhappy surroundings—a dream is for them one of the principal means of forgetfulness.

'Dreams, always dreams!' cries Baudelaire in his *Invitation au Voyage*, 'and the more delicate and ambitious the soul, the more dreams carry it far from the possible. Every man carries within him his dose of natural opium, endlessly secreted and renewed; from birth to death how many hours can we count filled by positive delight, or by an accomplished, decided action.'

And at the end of his *Projets de Voyages* he exults in the power of dream :—

'To-day in my dreams I have had three domiciles in which I found equal pleasure. Why force my body to change its place when my mind travels so easily?'

Poe said of himself that all his life he had been but a dreamer, that in dreaming lay ever his greatest pleasure. 'To muse for long unwearied hours with my attention riveted to some frivolous device on the margin or in the typography of a book; to be absorbed for the better part

of a summer's day in a quaint shadow falling aslant upon the tapestry on the floor; to lose myself for an entire night in watching the steady flame of a lamp on the embers of a fire; to dream away whole days over the perfume of a flower; to repeat monotonously some common word until the sound of it, by frequent repetition, ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind; to lose all sense of motion or physical existence by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in: such were a few of the most common and least pernicious vagaries induced by a condition of the mental faculties, not indeed altogether unparalleled, but certainly bidding defiance to anything like analysis or explanation.' He liked to think of the universe as one great dream.

> 'All that we see or seem,
> Is but a dream within a dream';

and his Eureka was offered 'to the dreamers, and those who put faith in dreams as the only realities.'

M. Lauvrière in his detailed book on Poe has pointed out the dangers to which such a temperament lays itself open 'when all the fantasies and curiosities of the interior life triumph over the demands and laws of the external world,'—hysteria is according to him the commonest of them. The saddest result of this temper comes, I think, when the dreams turn to nightmares.

The dreamy humour appears also in those fables 'Silence,' 'Shadow,' of which we are reminded by such prose poems of Baudelaire as 'L'Etranger,' 'Les Bienfaits de la Lune.' When Poe and Baudelaire paint Nature (in the landscape sense of the word), they always call forth a dream-landscape, a landscape which is imaginary, fairy-like, or as M. Lemaître would say *lunaire*. As a matter of fact, we know that Poe had intended to describe in great detail a moon-landscape, as he tells us:—

'Fancy revelled in the wild and dreamy regions of the moon

Imagination, feeling herself for once unshackled, roamed at will among the ever-changing wonders of a shadowy and unstable land. Now there were hoary and time-honoured forests, and craggy precipices, and waterfalls, tumbling with a loud noise into abysses without bottom. Then I came suddenly into still noonday solitudes, where no wind of heaven ever intruded, and where vast meadows of poppies and slender lily-looking flowers spread themselves out a weary distance, all silent and motionless for ever. Then again I journeyed far down away into another country, where it was all one dim and vague lake, with a boundary line of clouds. And out of this melancholy water arose a forest of tall eastern trees like a wilderness of dreams. And I bore in mind that the shadows of the trees which fell upon the lake remained not on the surface where they fell—but sank slowly and steadily down, and commingled with the waves, while from the trunks of the trees other shadows were continually coming out, and taking the place of their brothers thus entombed. "This then," I said thoughtfully, "is the very reason why the waters of this lake grow blacker with age, and more melancholy as the hours run on."'

This is a perfect example of dream-landscape.

And from this same dreamy temper springs the habit of assigning a kind of life to inanimate objects. With Poe this idea turns rather to the terrible side. Perhaps the best example comes in the tale *Berenice*. At the sight of Berenice's smile he becomes obsessed with the idea of her teeth :—

'I surveyed their characteristics, I dwelt upon their peculiarities, I pondered upon their conformation, I mused upon the alteration in their nature. I shuddered as I assigned to them in imagination a sensitive and sentient power, and, even when unassisted by the lips, a capability of moral expression. Of Mademoiselle Salle it has been well said, *Que tous ses pas étaient des sentiments*, and of Berenice I more seriously believed, *que toutes ses dents étaient des idées*.'

With Baudelaire the development of this idea is rather purely contemplative. Take, for example, the opening of the *Chambre Double* :—

'A room which is like a dream, a truly spiritual room whose stagnant atmosphere is delicately tinted with pink and blue.

'There the soul takes a bath of idleness perfumed with regret and desire. It is something like the twilight, blueish with a tint of rose; a voluptuous dream during an eclipse.

'The furniture takes on an outstretched, prostrate, languid form. The furniture seems to be dreaming; it seems endowed with a somnambulistic life, like vegetable and mineral. The coverings speak a mute language, like flowers, skies, or sunsets.'

This is the trait of Baudelairism which—as we shall see—was so enthusiastically taken up, carried to excess even, by Rodenbach.

In their love of the mysterious Poe and Baudelaire had shown themselves members of the romantic movement; the same is true of their theory of contrast, of joy born of misery, and of vice producing virtue. As Poe says at the beginning of *Berenice* :—

'Misery is manifold. The wretchedness of earth is multiform. Over-reaching the wide horizon as the rainbow, its hues are as various as the hues of that arch, as distinct too, yet as intimately blended. Over-reaching the wide horizon as the rainbow! How is it that from beauty I have derived a type of unloveliness? from the covenant of peace a simile of sorrow? But as in ethics evil is a consequence of good, so in fact out of joy is sorrow born.'

The idea of these two alternatives is found throughout Baudelaire's 'Spleen et Idéal,' but true Baudelairism goes even further than this Byronism—putting the contrast into one and the same person :—

'Je suis la plaie et le couteau,
Je suis le soufflet et la joue,
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau!'

As for the verbal imitations of Poe in Baudelaire, M. Lauvrière in his book on Poe has sought them out with such indefatigable energy that it is impossible not to quote him on this subject. As he well remarks, it is impossible

to read 'Réversibilité,' 'L'Irréparable,' 'L'Harmonie du Soir,' without noticing how Baudelaire employs the Poësque device of line—repetition. 'Le Flambeau Vivant' was directly inspired by Poe's sonnet to Helen. The idea *les morts, les pauvres morts ont de grandes douleurs'* is another reminiscence of Poe; and again when Baudelaire describes himself as one of those

> 'Au rire éternel condamnés
> Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire'

he must have had in mind Poe's lines in the 'Haunted Palace':—

> 'Through the pale door
> A hideous throng rushed out for ever
> And laugh—but smile no more.'

In the same way in the *Poèmes en Prose,* Baudelaire's analysis of the motives of wrongdoing in the 'Mauvais Vitrier' is certainly suggested by Poe's 'Imp of the Perverse,' just as 'Laquelle est la Vraie' is obviously copied from 'Morella.'

Poe's range was far more limited than that of Baudelaire; the Frenchman offers us a far more complex character to study. One of the reasons for this lies doubtless in the fact that Poe never really spoke out about himself—he never even mentions his surroundings—Baudelaire records all the problems of the various moods of his troubled brain. Poe offers us no criticism of life, he accepts it; therein he is far more resigned than Baudelaire. There is no counterpart of Baudelaire's *Révolte* in Poe's work.

It is by this aloofness that Poe merits Mr Andrew Lang's reproach that he 'lacked humanity.' He limited himself entirely to the unreal world, and therefore he can only appeal to us in a certain mood—and he gives us nothing to carry away.

II

SAINTE-BEUVE

WHEN we tried in our first chapter to analyse 'Baudelairism,' we had to make a sketch of the Baudelaire who lay slumbering in the heart of Sainte-Beuve.

Here we have to return to this fertile subject—without the pretension even of exhausting it. Sainte-Beuve is indeed the Montaigne of the nineteenth century, and everything which explains him must be in some way sacred to us.

The first thing that strikes us when we study the relations between Sainte-Beuve and Baudelaire is the extreme benevolence with which the fully developed critic (and henceforth a very classic and very Latin critic), treats this young, unknown and 'Parnassian' poet. The reason is that in the author of the *Fleurs du Mal* Sainte-Beuve rediscovered the author of *Joseph Delorme*, of the *Consolations*, and of *Volupté*. He himself wrote to Baudelaire: 'My poetry is connected with yours. I had tasted the same bitter fruit, full of ashes at the heart.'

And from his 'Correspondance,' we see that Baudelaire had a sincere affection for Sainte-Beuve.

He says somewhere of himself: 'My affections spring largely from the mind,' and the saying applies well to this particular friendship.

Baudelaire loved Poe, because he thought that Poe resembled him; in the same way, what attracted him in the first place to Sainte-Beuve was the connection he saw

between Sainte-Beuve's *Poésies de Joseph Delorme* and the *Fleurs du Mal.*

In 1866, Baudelaire wrote in a letter to Sainte-Beuve :—

'I have been trying to plunge myself again into the "Spleen de Paris" (prose poem) for it was not finished. Well, one of these days I hope to be able to show the world a new Joseph Delorme fastening his rhapsodic thought to every accident of his stroll through life, and drawing from every object a disagreeable moral. . . . Joseph Delorme came in there quite naturally. I have taken to reading your poems again *ab ovo.*

'I saw with pleasure that on every page I recognised lines that were old friends. It would seem that I had not such bad taste when I was a youngster.'

In this same letter we learn that Baudelaire's favourites in this collection of poems were the 'Sonnet à Mme. G.,' 'Le Joueur d'Orgue,' 'Dans ce cabriolet de place.'

Baudelaire and Sainte-Beuve have the same deep theory of art: you must pierce below the surface of things, try and see the soul lying underneath and understand its mystery. Here is one of Joseph Delorme's *Pensées* on this subject :—

'The feeling for art implies a lively and intimate understanding of things. While most men stop at the surface and appearance, while the real philosophers recognise and affirm the existence of a *je ne sais quoi* lying beyond natural phenomena, without being able to determine the nature of this *je ne sais quoi*, the artist, as if he were endowed with a separate sense, sets himself peacefully to work to realise, under this visible world, the second and wholly interior world, of which the majority ignore the existence, while the philosophers limit themselves to affirming its existence. The artist is present at the invisible action of forces and sympathises with them as with a soul, he has received at birth the key of symbols and the understanding of figures; that which to others is incoherent or contradictory is for him merely a harmonious contrast, a distant concord of the universal lyre.'

In 1830 he writes to his good friend the Abbé Barbe :—

'I care very little for literary opinions . . . what I attend to seriously is life itself, its aim, the mystery of our own hearts; happiness, goodness; and sometimes, when I feel sincerely inspired, the wish to express these ideas and feelings in accordance with the remote type of eternal beauty.'

And it is the same kind of beauty which attracts both Sainte-Beuve and Baudelaire; as the former put it: 'I learnt . . . to follow, to fear and desire, that type of beauty which I will call baneful.'[1]

Sainte-Beuve loves a beauty which holds herself aloof, which is not the popular ideal of the common herd:—

'. . . the fact is that beauty, every kind of beauty, is no light thing accessible at once to all; beyond ordinary beauty there is another to which one is initiated, and the steps leading up to it must be climbed slowly, like those of a temple or a sacred hill.'

He has the same Baudelairian theory of the double aspect of the universe: 'Idol and symbol, revelation and deception, that is the aspect of all human beauty since Eve,' which recalls Baudelaire's words: 'As quite a child I felt in my heart two contradictory ideas: the horror of life, and the ecstasy of life.'—*Mon Cœur mis à nu.*

Like Baudelaire again, the art that Sainte-Beuve desires at this period is a dreamy art:—

'Had it been given me to organise my life for my own pleasure, I would have wished it to have as motto, 'L'art dans la rêverie, et la rêverie dans l'art.'—*Pensées de Joseph Delorme.*

Or to quote from his poetry:—

'Puisque la nuit est sans nuages,
Je veux rêver, rêver toujours';

and the same idea recurs in that paragraph in *Volupté* where he speaks of the great influence the *Livre des Erreurs de la Volonté* and *L'homme du Désir* had upon him: 'One truth in it struck me among others, that place

[1] *Volupté.*

where it is said that man has his birth and life in thoughts.'

Both Baudelaire and Sainte-Beuve possessed an insatiable curiosity; in Sainte-Beuve this curiosity is a dominant trait in his character, and became an almost physical need of investigation, of research, of comprehension. This it is that made him such a great critic. Joseph Delorme confesses this curiosity:—

> 'Souvent un grand désir de choses inconnues,
> D'enlever mon essor plus haut que les nues,
> De ressaisir dans l'air des sons évanouis,
> D'entendre, de chanter mille chant inouïs,
> Me prend à mon réveil.'

Or in these quotations from *Volupté*:—

'Curiosity in research had a dangerous attraction for me, and without the pretext of honest zeal for truth, it vigorously decomposed what remained of my faith.'

'Entry into a new home was always an agreeable discovery for me; on the very threshold I felt a kind of commotion; in the twinkling of an eye I would construct all its smallest concerns. That was a gift with me, a sign by which I should have read the intentions of Providence on my destiny.'

This curiosity, this desire to see everything, to understand everything, brings with it the fear of being tied down to one place. As Baudelaire says: 'This life is a hospital wherein each patient is seized with the desire to change his bed,' and as Sainte-Beuve puts it:—

'"What! tie myself down?" I said to myself. "Tie myself down even in happiness!" And face to face with this solemn idea, a shiver thrilled my whole body.'

'There rose in the depths of my being a presentiment so painful as to be almost exhausting, and which warned me, in its wholly comprehensible languour, that I must wait, that the hour for decisive resolutions had not yet struck. The world, travel, the countless chances of war and courts, all those mysterious calcula-

tions with which youth is so lavish, spread themselves before my eyes in the perspective of the infinite, collected, floated in mobile form under the tricks of light in the shadow of the thicket. I loved emotion, and misfortune even when only foreseen.'

And elsewhere in the same book:—

'I suffered too on my own account for my unsatisfied powers, for that need of danger and renown which buzzed in my ears, for those varied tastes which, had they been cultivated in time and favoured by opportunity, would, I presumed to think, have made of me a political orator, a statesman or a warrior. My habitual thoughts of love and pleasure which overshadowed all others, undermining them little by little, did not immediately destroy them; as I bathed in the overflowing lake of my languour, I frequently struck against a point of these more cruel rocks.'

A favourite Baudelairian theory is that which has been well called *la consolation par les arts*:—

'Oui, le plaisir s'envole,
La passion nous ment; la gloire est une idole,
Non pas l'Art; l'Art sublime, éternel et divin
Luit comme la Vertu; le reste seul est vain.'

These are Sainte-Beuve's words; here are Baudelaire's:—

'Fauconille *proved* for me, peremptorily, irrefutably, that the intoxication of art is more fitted than any other to veil the terrors of the abyss; that genius can act a comedy on the brink of the tomb with such joy as prevents it from seeing the tomb, lost as it becomes in a paradise which excludes all idea of the tomb or destruction.'

Baudelaire refers here to the 'intoxication of art': with him, as we have seen, there can be consolation only through oblivion, and there is no oblivion without intoxication of one sort or another. Sainte-Beuve felt the same thing:—

'I learnt that with sincere and tender characters voluptuousness is the initiation into vices and other base passions which they would

never have dreamed of in the beginning. It made me conceive of intoxication, for in the evening after certain days I who am generally moderate have gone into a café, and asked for some strong liqueur, which I drank down eagerly.'

Sainte-Beuve is in a way as much *enfant de son siècle* as Baudelaire ; he too suffers from the *maladie du siècle*—on which subject we may follow the example of M. Anatole France, and quote Taine's words describing it as

'the restlessness of Werther and of Faust, just like that which, at a similar moment, agitated man eighteen hundred years ago. I mean that discontent with the present, the vague desire for a higher beauty and ideal happiness, that painful tending towards the infinite. Man suffers by reason of his doubts, and yet he doubts, he tries to grasp his beliefs once more, they melt in his hands.'

This is, indeed, a Baudelairian state of mind ; Sainte-Beuve may be said to have cultivated and encouraged it. It is he himself who applies St. Augustine's words *amabam amare* to his own case.

Such a state of mind is bound to produce pessimism.

'I learnt that for man each morning is reparation, each day continual ruin ; but the reparation suffices less and less, and the ruin continues to increase.'

This is one of the irrefutable conclusions of *Volupté*.

As a pendant to this conclusion let us quote that declaration from a letter to the Abbé Barbe which evolves through *Joseph Delorme*, the *Consolations*, and *Volupté* :—

'After many philosophic excesses and many doubts, I hope that I have arrived at believing that here on earth there is no peace save in religion, the orthodox Catholic religion practised intelligently and submissively. But alas ! for me this is but a theoretical result or inward appearance ; and I am far from arranging my life and all my actions as they should be.'

Here we see the Sainte-Beuve who was able to write his immortal *Port Royal*. Later on, another Sainte-Beuve

appears—the one who remembers having been a disciple of Cabanis and of Destutt de Tracy. As he grew older, Sainte-Beuve became more and more sceptic. This is not the place for seeking the reasons of this change, but one may say that towards the end of his life his philosophy is that of the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'

Baudelaire, who died comparatively young, had not time to complete his evolution ; all that one can say is that a few hopeful phrases, a few sincere resolutions are to be found in *Mon Cœur mis à nu*.

'I swear to myself to take henceforward these rules as the everlasting rules of my life.

'To pray to God every morning, to God who is the *receptacle of all strength*, and *all justice*, *to my father*, *to Mariette and to Poe* as intercessors ; pray them to lend me the *necessary strength* for doing my duty, and to grant to my mother life long enough to delight in my transformation, to work all day, or at least as much as my strength will permit ; to trust in God, that is to say in Justice itself, for the accomplishment of my projects ; and every evening to say a fresh prayer to ask of God life and strength for my mother and myself ; to divide all I earn into four parts—one for the expenses of daily life, one for my creditors, one for my friends, one for my mother ; to submit to the principles of strictest sobriety of which the first is the suppression of all "excitants," whatever they may be.'

Baudelaire's attitude in these matters is best expressed by the closing words of his prose poem, 'Laquelle est la vraie?' 'Like a wolf caught in a trap, I remain perhaps for ever bound to the tomb of the ideal.'

III

ALOYSIUS BERTRAND

BAUDELAIRE, in the letter to Arsène Houssaye which serves as Preface to his *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, says :—

'I have a little confession to make to you. It was when I was looking through — for the twentieth time at least — the famous *Gaspard de la Nuit* of Aloysius Bertrand (for has not a book that is known to you and me and a few of our friends every right to be called *famous*?) that the idea occurred to me of attempting something of the same kind, and of applying to the description of modern life—or rather of *a* modern and more abstract life, that process which he applied to the strangely picturesque ancient life.'

This it was that in the first place led us to study Bertrand, but indeed he deserves to be known for his own sake. He was long forgotten by the general public, or at most, remembered only by Baudelaire's passing mention of him, or by the statement of later critics that Baudelaire owed him little or nothing. In 1902, however, the *Mercure de France* reissued his work in easily accessible form, and this fact, and the fact that the book has a sale, are of themselves significant. Modern French poetry is, on one side, with de Herédia and Henri de Régnier, descriptive. Bertrand's whole art is descriptive, his prose poems are pictures, his turn of mind is pictorial, and in this connection it must be remembered that he had a marked talent for craftsmanship. In this sense Bertrand may be described as an ancestor of all the Parnassians.

Further, the qualities of Bertrand's style are such as to

keep him fresh. He knew how to choose picturesque words of which the picturesqueness was lasting, and thus his scenes are still living; the reader of 1911 gets just as much pleasure out of them as the reader of 1843 can have done. Indeed, when we come to study this curious and original talent, far from being surprised that it should have appealed strongly to Baudelaire, we come to wonder that he did not make more than passing mention of *Gaspard de la Nuit.*

Louis Jacques Napoléon Bertrand was born at Céva in Piedmont on the 20th April 1807. His father was from Lorraine, and a captain in the gendarmerie; his mother was Italian. In 1814 the family came to France, and settled in Dijon—for which town Louis Bertrand always kept so great an affection.

'J'aime Dijon,' he says in the Preface to *Gaspard de la Nuit*, 'comme l'enfant sa nourrice dont il a sucé le lait, comme le poète la jouvencelle qui a initié son cœur.'

As a schoolboy he seems to have shown no ordinary character; he took no part in his schoolfellows' amusements, preferring to take refuge in the solitude of the Jardin de l'Arquebuse of Dijon, sitting under the famous old black poplar, giving rein to his imaginative fancies.

He cared only for weird books, those that treated of occult sciences or macabre subjects: Hoffmann had a great attraction for him. One of the greatest of his youthful amusements was making life-size charcoal sketches of hanged corpses on his attic walls, which made the servants scream with terror to Bertrand's great delight. His brother Frédéric wrote of him as being nervous to excess:—

'Haunted by troubled visions, dissatisfied with himself, unjust towards others, giving ear to unknown voices that conversed with him in the silence of the night. The moaning of the wind, the cry of an osprey, the howl of a dog echoing in the distance, would strike in him chords of a hidden instrument.'

Those who knew him later on in Paris find the same traits of character. Sainte-Beuve tells us how from time to time you would discover him leaning on his attic window-sill talking for hours at a time with the weather-cock on his roof. Victor Pavie,[1] too, tells us that sometimes his brain became so full of dazzling visions that he did nothing, 'but waited dreaming, with that sublime incapacity that renders your man of genius more passive, more inert than the new-born babe.'

'Un rayon l'éblouit, une goutte l'enivre,' adds Sainte-Beuve.

It was in Dijon that Bertrand made his literary début in a paper called *Le Provincial*, which was devoted entirely to literary questions of the day, and which for a period of five months (1st May to 30th September 1828) appeared twice a week. Bertrand's contributions include three of the prose poems later included after modification in *Gaspard de la Nuit*: 'Les Lavandières (Jean des Tilles),' 'Clair de Lune,' 'La Gourde et le Flageolet (L'air magique de Jehan de Vittreaux),' and some poems. The following poem he dedicated to V. Hugo :—

[1] Victor Pavie is an interesting figure. His grandfather had come to settle in Angers a few years before the Revolution, his father had become *Imprimeur du Roi* at Angers, and there Victor Pavie lived all his life with the exception of six years spent in Paris. During these six years he was the friend of Nodier, and of Sainte-Beuve; he was always a welcome guest at Victor Hugo's, where he met all the celebrities of the day. When he returned to Angers he took over the management of his father's printing business, but at the same time wrote a considerable amount, but always in local papers. M. René Bazin has published two volumes of *Œuvres Choisies*, but the bulk of Pavie's work must be sought in the *Affiches d'Angers*, the *Union de l'Ouest*, the *Revue de l'Anjou*, and the *Mémoires de la société d'agriculture, sciences et arts*, and they are worth seeking out. His was, as M. Bazin puts it, a 'picturesque mind.' He devotes himself to the monuments of ancient Angers and old-time Anjou, describes them and calls up again their glory. He was always ready to seize any pretext 'to undertake or renew,' for himself and in his own part of the world the *voyage pittoresque et romantique à travers l'ancienne France*, which Nodier accomplished only once. In the same way it is mainly through his two editions of Joachim du Bellay and Louis Bertrand, that he is chiefly remembered at the present day.

‘ Comte en qui j’espère,
Soient au nom du Père
Et du Fils,
Par tes vaillants reîtres,
Les félons et traîtres
Déconfits !

Coucher à ta porte,
Quand le vent n’apporte
Cette nuit,
Sur ce lit sans toile
Pas même l’étoile
De minuit !

Les murailles grises,
Les ondes, les brises,
La vapeur,
La porte propice
Qu’une terre tapisse
Me font peur.

Là-haut, le feu terne
De quelque lanterne
Sous l’auvent
Qui pend, en ruines
Parmi les bruines,
Tremble au vent.

J’entends un vieux garde
Qui de loin regarde
Fuir l’éclair
Qui chante et s’abrite
Seul en sa guérite,
Contre l’air.

Je vois l’aube naître
Près de la fenêtre
Du manoir,
De dame en cornette
Devant l’épinette
De bois noir.

Et moi, barbe blanche,
Un pied sur la planche
Du vieux pont,

J'écoute et personne
A mon cor qui sonne
Ne répond.

Comte en qui j'espère
Soient au nom du Père
Et du Fils
Par tes vaillants reîtres
Les félons et traîtres
Déconfits !'

As Sainte-Beuve says: 'The rhymes and the rhythm would be enough to date this piece without any further indication. It was the moment of the ballad of *le roi Jean*, the day after the *Ronde du Sabbat*, and the day before *les Djinns*. Bertrand with his melancholy nocturnal caprice was greatly taken with these tricks; he, among all, may be said to have remained enamoured of that sprite, that sly muse: *Quem tu Melpomene semel.*'

Hugo's reply was benevolent and thoroughly characteristic. Any young poet sending verses to Hugo was almost sure of a flattering reply. To encourage youthful writers is the surest means of gaining their admiration, and the admiration of the younger generation is a great asset for the poet who would maintain an assured position. It would be interesting to make a collection of all Hugo's letters to aspiring poets who invoked his protection. Bertrand quoted this letter later on in the *Patriote de la Côte d'Or*:—

'I read your poems to a circle of friends as I read André Chénier, Lamartine, or Alfred de Vigny: it is not possible to have more complete command of the secrets of technique. Our Emile Deschamps would avow himself equalled. Send me often from the provinces those verses like which so few are made in Paris.'

Sainte-Beuve in his article on Bertrand quotes some other early poems, written in 1828: 'La Jeune Fille' and 'L'Ange Envolé.' In his edition of *Gaspard de la Nuit* of 1868, Asselineau collected some early poems: 'La

Nourrice,' a Scotch ballad imitated from Walter Scott, and a rendering of 'Jock o' Hazeldean,' the 'Regrets,' which we quote :—

'Lorsque, rêvant d'amour, dans l'oubli de la vie,
Nos bras s'entrelaçaient, ma main pressait ta main,
Oh ! qui m'eût dit alors qu'à mes baisers ravie,
Tu me fuirais le lendemain !

Ils ne reviendront plus, et faut-il te l'écrire !
Ces jours si tôt passés et passés à jamais,
Ces jours purs et sereins, tes baisers, ton sourire,
Et jusqu'à tes pleurs que j'aimais.

Alors, jeunes tous deux et sans inquiétude,
Et goûtant du plaisir le charme empoisonneur,
Ensemble nous cherchions l'ombre et la solitude,
Pour y cacher notre bonheur.

Et maintenant, combien il fut court ce beau songe !
Et maintenant, hélas ! séparés pour toujours,
Ce doux bonheur n'est plus qu'un aimable mensonge
Qui caressa nos premiers jours.'

LA JEUNE FILLE

'Rêveuse et dont la main balance
Un vert et flexible rameau,
D'où vient qu'elle pleure en silence
La jeune fille du hameau ?

Autour de son front je m'étonne
De ne plus voir ses myrtes frais ;
Sont-ils tombés aux jours d'automne
Avec les feuilles des forêts ?

Tes compagnes sur la colline
T'ont vue hier seule à genoux,
O toi qui n'es point orpheline,
Et qui ne priais pas pour nous !

Archange, ô sainte messagère,
Pourquoi tes pleurs silencieux ?
Est-ce que la brise légère
Ne veut pas t'enlever aux cieux ?

Ils coulent avec tant de grâce,
Qu'on ne sait, malgré ta pâleur,
S'ils laissent une amère trace,
Si c'est la joie ou la douleur.

Quand tu reprendras solitaire
Ton doux vol, sœur d'Alaciel,
Dis-moi, la clef de ce mystère
L'emporteras-tu dans le ciel?

C'est l'Ange envolé que je pleure
Qui m'éveillait en me baisant,
Dans des songes éclos à l'heure
De l'étoile et du ver luisant.

Toi qui fus un si doux mystère,
Fantôme triste et gracieux,
Pourquoi venais-tu sur la terre,
Comme les Anges sont aux cieux?

Pourquoi dans ces plaisirs sans nombre,
Oublis du terrestre séjour,
Ombre rêveuse, aimai-je une ombre
Infidèle à l'aube du jour?' [1]

In 1829, encouraged by his local successes, Bertrand decided to go to Paris. There is a sublime temerity about the way in which the provincial man of letters will set forth with sixpence in his pocket to seek fortune in the capital. Bertrand did not even take with him the commodity of good health, consumption had already laid its dread hands upon him. Victor Pavie, speaking of his first meeting with Bertrand in Paris, remarks on the husky voice betraying the delicate chest.

In Paris he became acquainted with Nodier, V. Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, and David d'Angers.

Victor Pavie, who met him at Nodier's house, describes him as:—

'A rather awkward young man, obviously provincial, speaking with a Burgundian accent, and with fiery eyes that betrayed the poet. In his face a kind of feverish dilettantism mingled with a

[1] The three last stanzas do not occur in Asselineau's edition.

somewhat uncouth sullenness; it was only too easy to recognise one of those victims of their ideals and caprices who are driven forth from their native provinces by incompatibility of race, and come to seek fortune and misery in Paris.'

On this particular occasion, reading was the order of the evening. Bertrand delivered his contribution nervously, standing on one foot 'like a crane on one leg,' but with no less effect for that. It was a kind of ballad 'carved like a chalice, coloured like a stained window, in which the rhymes rang like the notes of a Bruges peal,' and of which the striking feature was the recurrence of those two lines:—

> 'L'on entendait le soir sonner les cloches
> Du gothique couvent de Saint-Pierre de Loches.'

When he had finished, seized with shyness, he went and hid himself in a corner by the window. It was Sainte-Beuve who sought him out and talked to him. The great critic with his insatiable interest in everything—an excellent thing in critics—was immediately attracted by the originality of Bertrand who, in his turn, was grateful for the kindly attention, and it was to Sainte-Beuve in the first place that Bertrand carried his manuscript of *Gaspard de la Nuit*.

After this famous evening, Bertrand disappeared for some months; the next we hear of him is of his visiting Sainte-Beuve armed with the manuscript of *Gaspard de la Nuit*. A few days later David and Pavie went to visit Sainte-Beuve, and found him surrounded with leaves of this manuscript of which he spoke with the greatest enthusiasm. He read to his visitors 'Le Maçon,' 'Harlem,' 'La Viole de Gamba,' 'Padre Pugnaccio,' and 'L'Alchimiste.' 'Nous sortîmes de chez lui avec des bluettes sur les yeux,' says Pavie.

Eugène Renduel, the publisher, was also seized with the same enthusiasm, and consented to publish the manuscript. He planned an édition de luxe; Victor Pavie has

described how it was to have been. There were to be illustrations suited to the subjects :—

'Cranes and storks with wings entangled were to embroider the azure margins, whereon will-o'-the-wisp would be seen caught in a witch's hair; the earth was to have been seen as a corolla with the moon for pistil and the stars for stamens; and at the bottom very far away the immortal shadow of Jacquemart showing its profile in the dusk.'

But these projects were too magnificent, the publication was continually being put off, and in the meantime Bertrand had returned to Dijon, where from 1831-35 he and Charles Brugnot directed their newspaper the *Patriote de la Côte d'Or*. In 1835 he came back to Paris and obtained there the post of secretary to the Count Roedecker, an occupation so little suited to his temperament that he soon gave it up.

As we have said, he was consumptive, and now he fell into deep poverty—ever the worst of remedies for any disease, and went wandering about Paris from attic to garret till, in 1841, he was taken in at the Necker Hospice and after a few weeks died there.

It was in this hospital that chance again brought him into contact with David d'Angers. The great sculptor had been attracted by Bertrand's talent ever since that visit to Sainte-Beuve of which we have spoken. He had sought him out in Paris, but without success, and his intimate relations with Bertrand only began in those last six weeks in the hospital. Bertrand seems to have wished to die unrecognised and alone, like some poor animal who creeps away to a lonely spot—for he had recognised David much earlier when he used to come to the hospital to visit a young friend of his; but Bertrand hid his head under his sheet in order not to be recognised, till later on his utter loneliness grew too strong—he called David to his bedside. David obtained the sum of three hundred

francs for him from the minister of public education and remained with him to the end, and buried him. Bertrand's last moments were cheered by this sympathetic presence; up to the last he was making plans for the perfection and publication of his *Gaspard de la Nuit.*[1]

At the end of *Gaspard de la Nuit* we find these lines addressed to David; they seem to us a fit epitaph for this pathetic life:—

'And I have prayed, loved and sung, a poor and suffering poet! And it is in vain that my heart is overflowing with faith, love, and genius.

'I was born an abortive eaglet. The egg of my destinies, which the wings of prosperity never warmed, is as hollow, as empty as the Egyptian's golden nut.

'Ah! tell me then if so be thou knowest, man, that frail plaything cutting capers as he hangs from the string of his passions, is he nothing but a puppet worn out by life, broken by death?'

After Bertrand's death David bought back the manuscript from Renduel, and undertook the publishing of it. Sainte-Beuve consented to write an introductory notice, and to Victor Pavie fell the share of printing it.

'I will print it,' said Pavie. 'I shall print it as it is, without ornaments, arebesques or vignettes. He has suffered all too much from all the vanity of these dilatory illustrations: a truce to all this grandeur and length; besides he carries himself enough rubies and carbuncles to sparkle all alone, even in the night. I shall print it in our house whence his name will emanate with the perfume of a November violet, flower of graves, month of the dead. Louis Bertrand's cause is the provincial cause.'

These lines are quoted from an article which Pavie probably wrote as a prospectus when he first thought of printing *Gaspard de la Nuit.* The article is not to be found at the beginning of his edition; perhaps, having obtained Sainte-Beuve's article he feared to offend the great critic by inserting his own; or, perhaps, he did not

[1] The museum of Angers possesses two drawings by David of Bertrand on his deathbed.

want to be eclipsed, in which last case his fear was groundless.

The title-page of the first edition runs thus :—

GASPARD DE LA NUIT.
Fantaisies.
A la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot
par LOUIS BERTRAND
précédé d'une notice
par M. SAINTE-BEUVE.
Angers.
Imprimerie Libraire de V. Pavie, Rue St. Laud,
Paris chez Labitte, Quai Voltaire.
1842.[1]

The other editions of *Gaspard de la Nuit* are: *Asselineau's*, 1868, enlarged by the inclusion of some prose and verse pieces from the periodicals of the time. There was a de luxe edition of this with a frontispiece by Félicien Rops, edited by Poulet Malassis. In 1902 the *Mercure de France* republished the work in an ordinary paper edition.

Let us now consider the work itself. Bertrand is a thoroughgoing Romantic, and all the romantic devices appeal to him ; for instance, he discarded the name of Louis and viâ that of Ludovic arrived finally at the imposing Aloysius. He follows, too, the fashion of literary adoptions and presents us to the author of the *Fantaisies* as an old man he encountered one day in the Jardin de l'Arquebuse of Dijon. This old man was as like Bertrand as a brother would be, and in describing him Bertrand meant to paint his own portrait for us :—

'A poor wretch whose appearance told of distress and suffering. I had already noticed in the same garden his threadbare coat buttoned up to his chin ; his shapeless hat that no brush had ever

[1] This edition is exceedingly rare.

touched; his long willowy hair, all bushy; his hands, fleshless as a skeleton's; his quizzical, pitiful, sickly face, sharpened off by a Nazarenean beard, and my conjectures had charitably ranked him with those fifth-rate artists, violinists, portrait-painters, whom an insatiable hunger and inextinguishable thirst force to roam the world on the track of the wandering Jew.'

This peculiar person begins a conversation, and enters upon a long disquisition on the question 'What is art?' In the course of it he carries us through old Dijon, a Dijon of the Middle Ages, as striking as the Gothic Paris of Victor Hugo. Bertrand possessed to an extraordinary extent the power of rendering the life and the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. As he himself says of his descriptions of old Dijon: 'J'avais galvanisé un cadavre et ce cadavre s'était levé.'

For him the sculpture of the Middle Ages *lives*. Here is one of his experiences as told by Gaspard de la Nuit in his conversation on art:—

'One day I was busying myself before the Church of Notre-Dame with considering Jacquemart and his wife and child striking midday. . . . A burst of laughter made itself heard high up, and in a corner of the Gothic building I caught sight of one of those monstrous figures that the sculptors of the Middle Ages fastened by their shoulders to the gutters of cathedrals; a dreadful, accursed form, which, racked by suffering, thrust out its tongue, ground its teeth, wrung its hands. It was it that had laughed. . . . The stone figure had laughed—a distorted, terrible infernal laugh, but which was sarcastic, incisive, picturesque.'

This is the same Bertrand that we heard of keeping up a running conversation with a weathercock.

Gaspard's conclusion on the subject of art is that it does exist:—

'Art exists—but in the bosom of God! We ourselves are but the copyists of the Creator. The most magnificent, triumphal, and glorious of our works is never more than the unworthy imitation of His immortal works. All originality is an eaglet which breaks through its shell only in the sublime and fulminating atmosphere of

Sinai. Long did I seek for absolute art. Delirium! madness! Look on this forehead wrinkled by the iron crown of misfortune. Thirty years, and the secret for which I begged so hard from so many stubborn folk, to which I sacrificed youth, love, pleasure, fortune, the secret lies insensible as the common stone amidst the ashes of my illusions.'

Which conclusion is Romanticism again—*à la Chateaubriand.*

The discourse finished, Gaspard de la Nuit gets up to go; as he leaves he gives Bertrand a manuscript to read which he says will show him how many brushes he wore out on the canvas before he saw the vague dawn of half light. At the beginning of this manuscript is written *Gaspard de la Nuit, Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot.* Having read it Bertrand wishes to return it to its owner, but although he seeks him everywhere can never find him. The reason is simple when you know it, simply that Gaspard de la Nuit is the Devil, on which discovery Bertrand very properly determines to publish the manuscript.

Such is the story of the introduction. In the little Preface before the *Fantaisies* Bertrand explains his aim :—

'Art has always two antithetical aspects, like, for example, a medal one side of which bears striking resemblance to Paul Rembrandt, and the reverse to Jacques Callot. Rembrandt is the white-bearded philosopher who withdraws like a snail into his shell, whose thought is all absorbed in meditation and prayer, his eyes shut to collect himself, who converses with the spirits of beauty and science, and who wears himself out trying to penetrate the mysterious symbols of Nature. Callot, on the contrary, is the blustering jovial soldier who struts round the square, makes disturbance in the taverns, kisses the gipsy girls, whose only oath is by his rapier and carbine, and who has no cares beyond that of waxing his moustache. Now the author of this book has looked at art in its double personification; but he has not been too exclusive, and as well as fantasies in the manner of Rembrandt and Callot, you will find studies on Van Eyck, Lucas de Leyde, Albert Dürer, Pieter Neef, Breughel de

Velours, Breughel d'Enfer, Van Ostade, Gérard Dow, Salvator Rosa, Murillo, Fusely, and several other masters of different schools.'

We will begin then by considering the purely picturesque fantasies. This leads us at once to consider Bertrand's historical feeling. It was Michelet who, at a later date, said: 'L'histoire est une résurrection,' and Bertrand understood history in just the same way. He has the power of making the Middle Ages live for us as they did for him. Take, for example, 'Harlem':—

'Quand d'Amsterdam le coq d'or chantera
La poule d'or de Harlem pondera.'
Les Centuries de Nostradamus.

'Harlem, that wonderful curious picture, which sums up all the Flemish School, Harlem as Jean Breughel, Peter Neef, David Teniers, and Paul Rembrandt painted it:

'And the canal with its trembling blue water, the church with its stained glass window blazing like gold, and the stone balcony with the washing drying in the sun, and the roofs green with hops:

'And the storks beating their wings round the town-hall clock, stretching their necks straight up into the air to catch the raindrops in their beaks:

'And the jolly old burgomaster stroking his double chin with his fat hand, and the florist in love with a flower growing thin, his eye fixed on a tulip:

'And the gipsy girl in rapture over her mandoline; and the old man playing the rommelpot, and the child blowing out a bladder:

'And the carousers drinking in an evil tavern, and the inn-servant hanging up a dead pheasant at the window.'

Or take the 'Maçon' which Sainte-Beuve chose to read Pavie and David:—

THE MASON.

'*The Master-mason*: "*See these bastions, these buttresses: one would say they had been built to last for ever.*"—SCHILLER, *Wilhelm Tell.*

'The mason Abraham Knupfer sings, his trowel in his hand, on a scaffolding so high in the air that when he reads the gothic lines graven on the great bell his feet are on a level with the church and its thirty flying buttresses, and the town with its thirty churches.

'He sees the stone gargoyles belching forth the water from the slate roof into the mazy abyss of galleries, windows, crotchets, pinnacles, turrets, roofs, scaffoldings, among which the jagged motionless wing of a hawk makes a grey spot.

'He sees the fortifications cut out in the form of a star, the citadel puffed out like a chicken in a pie, the courtyards of the palaces where the sun dries up the fountains, and the cloisters in the monasteries where the shadows circle round the pillars.

'The imperial troops have their lodging in the suburb. Yonder is a trooper playing the kettledrum. Abraham Knupfer can make out his three-cornered hat, his red woollen shoulder-knots, his cockade, and his pigtail tied with ribbon.

'What he sees besides is the soldiers in the park with its plumes of great boughs. On a broad emerald-green lawn they riddle with bullets from their arquebuses a wooden bird fixed at the end of a pole.

'And that evening, while the harmonious cathedral nave slept—its arms spread out in the form of a cross, from his ladder he saw on the horizon a village which the troopers had set on fire flaming like a comet in the azure.'

Sainte-Beuve well called this the daguerreotype in literature. Victor Pavie remarked in Bertrand his 'patient touch counting the leaves in the infinite.'

This is just what the English pre-Raphaelites were to do later on in their reaction against Dr. Johnson's dictum (so admirably expressive of the eighteenth-century temper in these matters), that it was *not* necessary to paint the streaks of the tulip.

One of the finest, if not the very finest example of Bertrand's picturesque style, is that called 'Le Soir sur l'Eau.'

'Bords où Venise est reine de la mer.'

'The black gondola glided past the marble palaces like a bravo in search of adventure hiding a stiletto and a lantern under his cloak.

'In it a cavalier and a lady talked of love.

'"So heavy scented are the orange-trees, so indifferent are you. Ah, signorina, you are a statue in a garden."

'"Is this kiss the kiss of a statue, my Georgio—why so sullen? You love me then?"

'"Not a star in heaven but knows it, and thou knowest it not?"

'What is that sound? 'Tis nothing—only the plashing of the water as it goes up and down a step of the Giudecca staircase.

'Help! help! Ah—mother of God! Some one drowning!

'"Stand aside, he is shriven!" cried a monk who appeared upon the terrace.

'And the black gondola putting off at full speed glided past the marble palace like a bravo returning from a night adventure, a stiletto and a lantern under his cloak.'

We are reminded at once of Browning's 'In a Gondola,' and the fact that he suggests this comparison is of itself a feather in Bertrand's cap. But the prose poem of Bertrand is unforgettable in its compressed vigour—there is not one word too much; whereas Browning has wandered into superfluous details, his poem is six times as long as Bertrand's sketch, and though interesting loses correspondingly in dramatic effect.

And here again we see Bertrand's gift of 'presenting' historical atmosphere. He makes us realise eighteenth-century Venice with its epicurean life, the gallantry of the Lido, the perpetual revelry leading sometimes to crime, as in the drama he has so powerfully painted here. 'Le Soir sur l'Eau' is indeed a masterpiece.

We have already touched on Bertrand's imagination, his preference for weird subjects—the gloom attracts him far more than the sunshine; he 'preferred a Breughel to a Watteau, an Albert Dürer to a Delacroix, an etching of Rembrandt or Callot to all the sketches of Charlet, and all the vignettes of Tony Johannot.'

And, as we have said, in his youth drawing was one of his favourite pastimes. There exists in the library of Angers (B. 1443, K. 453) a small book of sketches made by Bertrand to illustrate *Gaspard de la Nuit*.[1] This book,

[1] We are indebted to the librarian of Angers for his courtesy in showing us these drawings.

which was given to the library of Angers by Madame Leferme, the daughter of David d'Angers, contains seventeen sketches which come as a commentary on Bertrand's imagination. Three of these, probably meant to go with the fantasy 'Clair de Lune,' represent a hanged corpse with the moon for background. In the first, there is a bell of which the hanged corpse forms the clapper, and behind is the jovial face of the moon. In the next there is no bell, the corpse is hanging from a balcony, and in the distance are seen a church steeple and some chimneys. In the next, again, we have the hanged corpse with the moon as background. Here is the prose poem 'Clair de Lune':—

'Reveillez-vous gens qui dormez,
Et priez pour les trépassés.'

'Oh! how sweet it is when the hour trembles in the belfry at night to gaze at the moon whose nose is fashioned like a golden carolus!

'Two lepers made plaint under my window, a dog howled in the road, and the cricket on my hearth chirped ever so softly.

'But soon my ear made its questionings in profound silence. The lepers had gone back to their hovels at the strokes of Jacquemart beating his wife.

'The dog had fled up a narrow lane at the approach of the halberds of the watch wheezing under the rain, and frozen in the blast.

'And the cricket had fallen asleep as the last cinder quenched its last gleam in the ashes in the fireplace.

'And to me it seemed,—so incoherent is fever,—that the moon screwing up her face put her tongue out at me like a hanged corpse.'

Bertrand never quite lost his youthful predilection for hanged corpses—they are as ubiquitous as the skull in Albert Dürer whom he admired so much.

'Le Cheval Mort' is another good example of this side of his imagination:—

'The knacker's yard—and on the left on a clovered lucern lawn, a cemetery with its gravestones; on the right a gallows like a one-armed man asking alms of the passers by.

'The wolves have torn the flesh round the neck of that horse who

was killed yesterday into such long cords that he still seems only decorated for the cavalcade with a cluster of red ribbons.

'Each night as soon as the moon comes to make wan the skies, the corpse flies away, mounted by a witch who spurs him on with the sharp bone of her heel, while the wind plays airs upon the organ pipes in his cavernous flanks.

'And if in this silent hour some sleepless eye were open in a grave in the garden of sleep, it would quickly close, fearful of seeing a spectre among the stars.

'And now the moon,[1] shutting one eye, only shines with the other to light up, like a floating candle, this thin wastrel of a dog lapping water from a pond.'

The same favourite idea recurs in 'Le Gibet,' especially the last paragraph: 'C'est la cloche qui tinte aux murs d'une ville sous l'horizon, et la carcasse d'un pendu que rougit le soleil couchant.'

Yet another good specimen of this macabre kind is 'Scarbo':—

'Oh! how many times have I heard and seen Scarbo when at midnight the moon shines like a shield argent on an azure banner strewn with golden bees.

'How many times have I heard his chuckle buzzing in the shadow of my alcove, and his nail grate over the silken curtains of my bed.

'How many times have I seen him come down from the ceiling, pirouette on one toe and roll across the room like the spindle fallen off a witch's distaff.

'Did I think he disappeared then? The dwarf grew tall between the moon and me as the steeple of a Gothic cathedral, a golden bell shaking at the tip of his pointed cap!

[1] It will have been noticed that Bertrand had a great affection for the moon. He has many fancies on this subject: 'La lune peignait ses cheveux avec un démêloir d'ébène qui argentait d'une pluie de vers luisants les collines, les prés et les bois.' 'La lune qui a le nez fait comme un carolus d'or.' 'La lune brille dans le ciel comme un écu d'argent sur une bannière d'azur semée d'abeilles d'or.'

He also represented his guardian angel keeping off with a peacock's feather the spirits who would fain have stolen his soul: 'Pour la noyer dans un rayon de la lune ou dans une goutte de rosée.'

One of the finest of Baudelaire's *Poèmes en Prose* is the 'Bienfaits de la Lune,' which was probably suggested by this feature in Bertrand.

'But soon his body grew blue and diaphanous as candle wax, his face wan as a snuffed candle, and suddenly he went out.'

There is another 'Scarbo' in that part of the *Fantaisies* entitled 'La Nuit et ses prestiges,' which is very Poësque :—

'"Whether thou die absolved or damned," muttered Scarbo in mine ear last night, "for shroud thou shalt have a spider's web, and I will bury the spider with thee."

'My eyes red with weeping, I answered him: "At least give me for shroud a leaf of the aspen, that I may be therein rocked by the lake's breath."

'"No," sneered the mocking dwarf, "thou shalt be the food of the horn-beetle who hunts by night, of the flies blinded by the setting sun."

'"Dost thou prefer," I cried tearfully, "dost thou then prefer that my blood should be sucked by a tarantula with the trunk of an elephant?"

'"Well," said he, "be consoled, thou shalt have for shroud the gold spotted winding-sheet of a serpent's skin, and I will swathe thee therein like a mummy. . . ."'

The last drawing in the book to which we have referred seems to illustrate this. It represents a bed on which a man is lying swathed in bands like a mummy ; the drawing of the man is made separately, then cut out and pasted on the bed.

It was not only in his sleep that Bertrand was haunted by such curious fancies as he describes in *Un Rêve*; another equally weird is that which he puts under the Flemish school, *Départ pour le Sabbat.*

Here is the dream :—

'It was night, there were first,—so did I see, so do I tell,—an abbey with walls creviced by the moon, a forest pierced by winding paths and Morimont[1] swarming with cloaks and hats.

'Next there were,—as I heard so do I tell,—the funeral tolling of a bell answered by sobs from a cell,—plaintive cries and fierce laughter which made every leaf on the boughs quiver, and the low

[1] Morimont was the square in Dijon where executions took place.

hum of the black penitent's prayers, as they accompanied a criminal to execution.

'Lastly,—so did the dream end, and so do I tell it,—a monk expiring on a bed of ashes used for the dying, a maiden hanged from the branches of an oak, and who struggled, and I dishevelled, whom the executioner bound on to the spokes of a wheel.'

The fifteenth drawing in Bertrand's book represents the forest of the first paragraph—a very black drawing (Ecole Flamande)—*Départ pour le Sabbat.*

'A dozen of them were there taking their *soupe à la bière*, and each had for spoon a skeleton forearm.

'The hearth was red with glowing cinders, the candles guttered in the smoke, and from the plates rose an odour of graves at springtime.

'And when Maribas laughed or wept it was like a bow groaning upon the three strings of a dislocated violin.

'But the trooper opened out upon the table by the candle light a book of magic whereon a singed fly made antics.

'This fly was still buzzing when a spider with great hairy belly climbed over the edge of the magic volume.

'But already wizards and witches had flown up the chimney all riding astride, some on the broom, some on the tongs, and Maribas on the frying-pan handle.'

So much then for the macabre. There is yet another side to Bertrand's talent—that of painting Nature. In the Introduction he says :—

'That part of art which is feeling was my painful conquest . . . but that part of art which is *idea* still lured my curiosity. I thought I should find the complement of art in nature. Therefore I studied nature.'

Not only he studied Nature—he loved her, and his love shows itself from time to time in his work with charming effect, 'Who does not love?'

'Qui n'aime?' he asks at the opening of his *Marquis d'Avoca.*

'Qui n'aime, aux jours de la canicule, dans les bois, lorsque les gens criards se disputent la ramée et l'ombre, un lit de mousse et la feuille à l'envers du chêne?'

Chèvremorte too is full of his feeling for Nature :—

'No balm at morn after the rain, nor at eve at dew time, nothing to charm the ear but the cry of a little bird in search of a blade of grass.

'Desert that no longer hears the voice of John the Baptist! Desert where no longer dwell the hermit and the dove.

'Even so is my soul a waste, where on the brink of the abyss, one hand stretched out towards life, and the other towards death, I utter a despairing sob. The poet is like the wallflower which takes root in the granite, and asks not so much for soil as for sun. But, alas, there is no more sun for me since the closing of those sweet eyes that fed my genius.'

This is Romantic too—just as is the voluntary melancholy of *Encore un printemps.*

'Another spring, another drop of dew cradled for a moment in this bitter calyx, to escape from it like a tear.

'O my youth! thy joys were frozen by the kisses of Time, but thy sorrows have out-lived Time whom they smothered in their bosom.

'And you who wove the silken skein of my life, O women! if in my romance some one acted as deceiver it was not I—if there have been some deceived, it was not you.

'O Spring, thou little bird of passage, singing sadly in the poet's heart and the oak's foliage.

'Another spring—another ray of May sunshine, in the world on the poet's brow, in the woods on the old oak.'

Another vivid picture is that of the storm in *La Ronde sous la Cloche.*

'Suddenly the thunder growled on the top of Saint John's. The enchanters vanished, struck to death, and from afar I saw their books of magic burning like a torch in the black belfry.

'This terrible light painted the walls of the Gothic church with the

red flames of purgatory and hell, and threw along the neighbouring houses the shadow of the gigantic statue of Saint John.

'The weathercocks grew rust-laden; the moon melted the pearl grey clouds, the rain only fell drop by drop from the roof-edges, and the breeze, throwing open my insecurely fastened window, flung over my pillow the jasmine flowers shaken down by the storm.'

Sainte-Beuve in his criticism of Bertrand quotes an unpublished fragment which is a very lively picture of the life in a farm near Dijon, where Bertrand took refuge from a storm one night.

'Quelles honnêtes figures dans ces rayons de toile couleur de terre. Ah! la paix et le bonheur ne sont qu'aux champs!' he exclaims. Sainte-Beuve compares this fragment to Burns's 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' and this leads us to an interesting point. We are accustomed to go to poets like Burns, or Cowper, or Gilpin when we are a little tired of the demands made on our imagination by the more exciting romantic poets, and turn for relief to simple yet lively quiet, peaceful pictures. But to find the two opposed tempers in one and the same poet, and that a poet of the French Romantic era, is indeed a striking thing. Bertrand half apologises for his sketch by comparing it with a Rembrandt picture; but the quiet temper is there, explain it away as he will.

In spite of the originality of this side of his work, it is probably by the other, the macabre and picturesque side, that Bertrand will be remembered, if remembered he is. Fame did not come to him in his lifetime, and so far he has escaped his share of posthumous glory. There is a good deal of Hoffmann in Bertrand. It lay outside the scope of this study to consider the debt of Poe to Hoffmann. Barbey d'Aurevilly said well of them, that they were 'les deux Chinois du même opium,' and there is much Poe in Baudelaire. So would we justify Bertrand's place in the category of Baudelairians.

IV

PETRUS BOREL

PETRUS BOREL is one of Baudelaire's predecessors who deserves to be very much better known than he is; he is more forgotten than Bertrand, for hitherto his work has not been reprinted and reissued in accessible form.

The first and perhaps greatest of the race of eccentrics who appear with the Romantic School was born at Lyons in 1809—one of an extremely poor family of fourteen children. He was brought up to be an architect and came to Paris to complete his studies, but he soon tired of architecture, and after trying his hand at painting in the studio of Eugène Devéria, turned to literature. He was the star of the 'Petit Cénacle' which Théophile Gautier has portrayed so well for us in his *Histoire du Romantisme*, a cénacle which included Théophile Gautier himself, Gérard de Nerval, Augustus MacKeat,[1] Philothée O'Neddy,[2] Jules Vabre. An important factor in Borel's ascendancy here seems to have been his startlingly picturesque appearance. Gautier called him 'the most perfect specimen of the romantic ideal.'

M. Claretie (who is *the* authority on Borel) has described his appearance for us. He wore

'a waistcoat à la Robespierre, on his head the conventional pointed hat with its large buckle, his hair short à la Titus, a long untouched beard—and that at a moment when no one wore it so—superb eyes, magnificent teeth, as handsome as Alphonse Rabbé, that other *révolté* who was called the Antinous of Aix.'

[1] *i.e.* Maquet.

[2] Théophile Dondey.

It was this appearance, so the story goes, which frightened the inhabitants of Ecouny when Borel and a friend, got up in the same manner, passed through. They were followed, arrested, and imprisoned for a few days while the necessary inquiries were made. In 1832 Borel was again arrested by the police.

'What do you want with me?' he asked. 'What have I done to be arrested?'

'Sir,' was the reply, 'pretence is useless—*vous avez la démarche républicaine!*'

As a matter of fact, Borel called himself a republican—but a 'lycanthrope' republican—that is his originality.

'Yes, I am a republican, but it was not the July sun that brought forth this lofty thought in me. I was a republican from my childhood, but not republican in the sense in which the lynx would understand it; my republicanism is lycanthropy. . . . If I talk of Republic it is because this word represents for me the greatest independence civilisation and association can allow us.'

Here is the Baudelairian enemy of progress.

Borel's first writings were some poems which, considering the period in which he was writing, are, of course, deeply pessimistic; but here again he is original, the despondent note rings true, he was at all events sincere.

'Comme une louve ayant fait chasse vaine,
Grinçant les dents, s'en va par le chemin,
Je vais, hagard tout chargé de ma peine,
Seul avec moi, nulle main dans ma main,
Pas une voix qui me dise—A demain! . . .

Ma jeunesse me pèse et devient importune.
Ah! que n'ai-je du moins le calme du vieillard?
Qu'ai-je à faire ici bas? traîner dans l'infortune!
Lâche, rompons nos fers! . . . ou plus tôt ou plus tard.
Mes pistolets sont là—*déjouons le hasard.*'

Or the rebellious pessimism of 'Doléance':—

'Autour de moi ce n'est que palais, joie immonde,
Biens, somptueuses nuits,
Avenir, gloire, honneurs : au milieu de ce monde,
Pauvre et souffrant je suis
Comme entouré des grands, du roi de saint office,
Sur le quemadero,
Tous en pourpre assemblés pour humer un supplice,
Un juif au brazero.

Car tout m'accable enfin, néant, misère, envie
Vont morcelant mes jours ;
Mes amours brochaient d'or le crêpe de ma vie.
Désormais plus d'amours !'

He comes back to this idea in his Testament when he writes :—

'Chanter l'amour ! . . . pour moi l'amour c'est de la haine, des gémissements, des cris, de la honte, du deuil, du fer, des larmes, du sang, des cadavres, des ossements, des remords—je n'en ai pas connu d'autre.'

And here are some striking lines from 'L'Hymne au Soleil' :—

'Là dans ce sentier creux, promenoir solitaire
De mon clandestin mal,
Je viens tout souffreteux et je me couche à terre,
Comme un brute animal.
Je viens avouer ma faim, la tête sur la pierre,
Appeler le sommeil ;
Pour étancher un peu ma brûlante paupière
Je vais user mon écot de soleil.

Là-bas dans la cité, l'avarice sordide
Des chefs sur tout rempart
Au mouton peuple vend le soleil et le vide.
J'ai payé, j'ai ma part.

Mais sur tous, tous égaux devant toi, soleil juste,
Tu verses tes rayons,
Qui ne sont pas plus doux au front d'un sire auguste,
Qu'au sale front d'une gueuse en haillons.'

And here again is a poignant accent of sincerity :—

HEUR ET MALHEUR.

'J'ai caressé la mort riant au suicide,
Souvent et volontiers quand j'étais plus heureux ;
Maintenant je la hais et d'elle suis peureux,
Misérable et mimé par la faim homicide.
C'est un oiseau, le barde : il doit rester sauvage ;
La nuit sous la ramure, il gazouille son chant ;
Le canard tout boueux se pavane au rivage,
Saluant tout soleil, ou levant ou couchant.
C'est un oiseau, le barde ! il doit vieillir austère,
Sobre, pauvre, ignoré, farouche, soucieux,
Ne chanter pour aucun et n'avoir rien sur terre
Qu'une cape trouée, un poignard et les cieux !
Mais le barde aujourd'hui, c'est une voix de femme,
Un habit bien collant, un minois relavé,
Un perroquet juché, chantonnant pour madame,
Dans une cage d'or un canari privé.
C'est un gras merveilleux versant de chaudes larmes,
Sur des maux obligés après un long repas,
Portant un parapluie et jurant par ses armes
Et l'elixir en main, invoquant le trépas.
Joyaux, bal, fleur, cheval, château, fine maîtresse,
Sont les matériaux de ses poèmes lourds :
Rien pour la pauvreté, rien pour l'humble en détresse.'

This is already highly original in the full swing of the Romantic movement.

In the verse Preface to his novel *Madame Putiphar*, Borel was to make a new departure with his symbolic figures of the World, Solitude, and Death. The conception is Baudelairian ; it was used over and over again while its originator was forgotten. We quote part of this Preface :—

'Une douleur renaît pour une évanouie
Quand un chagrin s'éteint c'est qu'un autre est éclos ;
La vie est une ronce aux pleurs épanouie. . . .
Dans ma poitrine sombre ainsi qu'en un champ clos,
Trois braves cavaliers se heurtent sans relâche.

Le premier cavalier est jeune, frais, alerte,
Il porte élégamment un corselet d'acier,
Scintillant à travers une résille verte,
Comme à travers les pins les *crystaux* d'un glacier.
. . . . . .

Le second chevalier, ainsi qu'un reliquaire,
Est juché gravement sur le dos d'un mulet
Qui ferait le bonheur d'un gothique antiquaire.
. . . . . .
Il est gros, gras, poussif ; son aride monture
Sous lui semble craquer et pencher en aval :
Une vraie antithèse—une caricature
De carême-prenant promenant carnaval !
Il est taché de sang et baise un crucifix. . . .

Pour le tiers cavalier, c'est un homme de pierre
Semblant le Commandeur, horrible et ténébreux
Un hyperboréen ; un gnome sans paupière,
Sans prunelle et sans front, qui résonne le creux,
Comme un tombeau vidé lorsqu'une arme le frappe.'

The first cavalier is the World, the second is Solitude, the last is Death, and the conclusion of the Preface is that

'Il n'est de bonheur vrai, de repos qu'en la fosse ;
Sur la terre on est mal, sous la terre on est bien.'

The most considerable part of Borel's work is, however, not his poems, but his prose—his *Contes Immoraux* (1833) and the long novel *Madame Putiphar* (1839).

The first of the *Contes Immoraux*, 'Monsieur de l'Argenterie l'Accusateur,' is characteristic—a great deal of sensation and not very much art. It is the story of a woman who is condemned to death by the very man who has been the cause of her undoing. The description of the execution in the rain, with the crowd who have come to look on, the Englishman who has paid five hundred francs for a window, the women who call out 'à bas les parapluies, on ne voit pas—soyez galants, messieurs, on ne voit pas!' in its thoroughly Baudelairian temper, reminds us of that tale of Villiers de l'Isle Adam—*Le convive des dernières fêtes*.

The second story 'Jacquez Barraou' is a very romantic study of jealousy. Jacquez Barraou is mistakenly jealous of his wife on account of a certain Juan Cazador

(Borel's heroes always have magnificent names). By feigning drunkenness he is able to discover the perfidy of Cazador. The result is a duel, in the midst of which the Angelus rings, whereupon the two antagonists fall on their knees and each prays for the other's soul. That process finished they turn back to their duel to the death.

In this tale, too, Borel shows that for him also the romantic exotism has its attraction. This is the description of Barraou's wife :—

'Oh ! how beautiful she seemed ! She was slim, gay, laughing ; her complexion that which comes of mixed races, and which you contemptuously call mulatto ; her features were delicate with the profile of an Artesian woman ; her bright eyes were almond shaped. Around her head she had gracefully bound a muslin turban ; coral earrings swung from her ears ; a necklace of Venetian ramina made a golden base to the graceful sweep of her beautiful neck ; her tapering fingers were imprisoned in costly rings.'

This exotic taste is to be found again in an article Borel wrote on Algeria (1845)—for him all good things come from the East. (In passing one may remark that Flaubert seems to have held a similar idea : not only are the subjects of the *Tentation de St. Antoine*, *Salammbô*, *Hérodias* oriental, but contain profound psychology of the Eastern peoples, and wonderful splendour of Oriental description). Here are Borel's words :—

'All dreams, all religion, all philosophy, are known to come to us from the East. The Asiatics of India are the only men on earth who have dreamed and imagined. We sons of the West and North have never had other goods than actuality and speed, and more so to-day than ever, and we think our task well fulfilled when our feet and not our brains have moved and performed their functions for twenty-four hours.

'Certainly you could travel throughout France without finding—with the exception of a few quite young pastoral poets looked on askance by their families—a single man seated in the shade of an elm to watch the scintillations of Venus or Canopa, or counting the

fibres of the lotus-flower like a Hindu, or drinking in the perfumes of the amra.'

He carries his enthusiasm to the point of believing that the French settlement in Africa will have a great salutary influence on French literature :—

'There is perhaps no thought, no idea on earth, but of which the germ is to be found on the banks of the Ganges. It is to Asia that the whole of our romance of the seven sages belongs; she it was who modified our romances of chivalry. . . . And such is the strength, the potentiality of Asiatic and African conception, that it is impossible to approach our poor black slaves without becoming impregnated with caprice, without thawing the ice of our cool reason, and of our minds wise and prudent even to stiffness.'

In his 'Dina' Borel created quite a Baudelairian figure—we should not be surprised to meet her in a novel of Huysmans'.

'Rendered depraved by pain she sought with eagerness anything that might awaken her apathy; she loaded herself with the most heavy-scented flowers, surrounded herself with vases filled with syringa, jasmine, vervein, roses, lilies, and tuberoses; she burnt incense of benzoin; she scattered round her amber, cinnamon, storax, musk. . . .'

We can imagine the approval with which Baudelaire would have heard this.

The most romantic, the most exaggerated and the most entertaining of the tales is 'Passereau l'Écolier.'

Passereau believing himself to be deceived by his mistress, Philogène, wishes to be finished with life. So he goes off to the public executioner and explains :—

'I have come to ask a service of you. I have come to beg you very humbly (I should be very grateful for this favour) to do me the honour, and the friendly act of guillotining me!'

The executioner explains his inability to render this service to persons other than those who have committed a crime. Passereau comes away determined to commit

the necessary crime. On arriving home he draws up a letter to the Government suggesting a tax on would-be suicides, and then makes an appointment with Philogène. They go for a walk in a deserted part of Paris, and Passereau begins to feel ill. Philogène begs him to return home, and Passereau then asks her to go to the fruit-trees at the end of a long dark alley where they are, and bring him fruit to quench his thirst. We give the dénouement in Borel's own words :—

'Philogène had only taken a few steps when she disappeared in the darkness. Passereau stretched himself full length on the ground, putting his ear to the earth and listened in terrible anxiety.

'Suddenly Philogène uttered a piercing shriek, and a dull thud was heard like that of a human body falling, a great splashing of disturbed water, and groans which seemed to come from underground. Then Passereau got up with demoniacal convulsions, and hastened as fast as he could along the path by the raspberry bushes. As he approached the cries became more and more distinct "Help! Help!" Suddenly he stopped, knelt down, and leant on a level with the ground over a large well.

'Right at the bottom the water was moving; from time to time something white reappeared on the surface, and exhausted cries escaped. "Help, help, Passereau, I am drowning!" Crouching, in silence, he listened without answering, just as leaning over a balcony one listens to some distant melody. . . .

'Philogène . . . was still floating on the surface, tearing away the worn brickwork with her nails. Then Passereau, with a great effort tore up the broken stones round the well's margin, and threw them down upon her one by one.

'All was once more silent, mournful as a funereal vision; all night he passed up and down under the willows.'

Baudelaire remembered this tale in connection with the drama he once meditated writing. Here is the description he gave of his hero's crime in a letter to Tisserant, 1854 :—

'Here is the scene of the crime. Note that it is already premeditated. The man comes first to the rendezvous. The place has been chosen by him. Sunday evening. A dark road or open

place. In the distance the sound of a string band. Sinister and melancholy scenery in the neighbourhood of Paris. Love scene—as sad as possible—between this man and woman; he wants to be forgiven—and really softens; in spite of the fact that she feels all her old affection reawakening, the woman refuses. This refusal irritates her husband who puts it down to an adulterous passion, or the command of a lover. *I must end this, yet I shall never have the courage, I cannot do that myself.* An idea of genius, full of cowardice and superstition, comes to him.

'He feigns sickness, which is not difficult, his real emotion helps him: Look, down there at the end of that little lane to the left you will find an apple-tree—go and get me an apple (of course he can find some other pretext—I only jot down that one as I go). The night is very dark, the moon is hidden. As soon as his wife is lost to view in the shadow he gets up from the stone he was seated upon: "*By the grace of God! If she escapes so much the better! If she falls in, it is God condemning her!*"

'He has shown her the road where she will find a well almost level with the ground.

'The sound of a heavy body falling into the water is heard—but preceded by a cry, and the cries continue.

'What is to be done—some one may come;—I may be taken, I shall be taken for the assassin. Besides she is condemned. . . . Ah! there are the stones, the stones at the edge of the well.

'He disappears running.

'Empty scene.

'While the noise of the falling bricks swells the cries decrease. They cease. The man reappears: "*I am free! Poor angel, how she must have suffered.*"'[1]

In *Madame Putiphar* Borel again touches the high-water mark of Romanticism; but there are some fine things in the book. We have already quoted the verse Preface, so pass straightway to make a short résumé of the tale.

[1] Cp. *Fleurs du Mal.*

'Je l'ai jetée au fond d'un puits,
Et j'ai même poussé sur elle
Tous les pavés de la margelle;
Je l'oublierai si je le puis!'

Deborah, the daughter of Lord and Lady Cockermouth, is in love with Patrick Fitzwhyte. The parents do not approve of her passion, and remorselessly separate the two lovers, who naturally decide to escape together.

Lord Cockermouth, however, discovers their conspiracy just in time to follow the fugitives with some of his companions. They attack the figure they suppose to be Patrick and seriously wound it, only to discover that they have got Deborah. The two lovers manage to make an arrangement by which it is agreed that Patrick shall make his escape to Paris, to be followed by Deborah as soon as her wounds are healed. Patrick is to write his address in Paris on the façade of the Louvre facing the Seine near the sixth pillar. The device works well, and Deborah and Patrick meet again in Paris. In the meantime, Patrick has been condemned for having murdered Deborah, and as his regiment in Paris hear of this, and since the colonel of the regiment has fallen in love with Deborah, difficulties arise.

Next, a brother officer and friend of Patrick's is convicted of having written a libel against Madame Putiphar (*i.e.* Madame de Pompadour); he is imprisoned in the Bastille, and Patrick takes it upon himself to go to Madame de Pompadour to ask for a pardon for his friend.

Madame Putiphar at once falls in love with Patrick, who finds a truly original way of responding to her advances. He goes into the library, takes down *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and shows Madame Putiphar the passage where it is said: 'La femme d'un charbonnier est plus estimable que la maîtresse d'un roi.' It is then Patrick's turn to be thrown into the Bastille, and Deborah is sent to the king.

In prison Patrick finds his friend, and the sufferings of these two are described with Poësque power—it is really terrible.

In the meantime Deborah has had a son, whom she brings up with the sole idea of making him avenge her wrongs.

When this son is old enough she sends him to her old enemy the colonel of Patrick's regiment, telling him to avenge his father. The boy insults the colonel, who kills him in a duel, puts the corpse on his horse and sends it back to Deborah. This, as Baudelaire remarked, is one of the most powerful scenes in the book—youthful courage stricken down at the first blow, and the annihilation of all the fond mother's schemes and hopes.

In the succeeding chapters, too, Borel again shows his real gifts in his vivid picture of the Revolution. Through all this time, Deborah's one aim has become to find her husband. In the end she is successful; she discovers him in prison—he is now quite old. Deborah embraces him, but he does not know her, nor can he be made to understand; under all his manifold sufferings his reason has given way—he is quite mad. When Deborah becomes convinced of the terrible truth, she falls down dead. So ends this long novel. It is a work very characteristic of Borel, showing his morbid tendency, his exaggeration, his love of melodramatic effect, and also his power of description and of conceiving *dramatic* effects.

Borel busied himself also with journalism; he, too, like Baudelaire later, wrote for *L'Artiste*. He, too, has an insatiable curiosity, which helps him on very much in his journalistic labours, and engenders in him all Merimée's love of the small, telling detail. Thus in his *Vert Galant* (which is little more than a list of Henry IV's mistresses), he tells us that the Comtesse de Chateaubriand had something of a squint, that the Duchesse d'Etampes' walk was in reality a waddle, that Diane de Poitiers' right arm was longer than her left, and so on and so forth.

He also wrote the *History of Footwear*—ancient and modern,—wherein he traces the history of cobblers, begin-

ning by interesting himself in the etymology of the word *cordonnier*:—

'On distinguait alors ceux qui faisaient les chaussures, en byzamiers et en cordonniers selon le cuir qu'ils travaillent. C'est du mot cordouaner qu'a été fait à la longue et par une prononciation adoucie notre barbarisme cordonnier.'

Nor does he omit the witty solution of this problem *cors donniers*.

Then he makes a list of all the shoemakers who achieved fame:—

'Jean Baptiste Gilla, Florentine shoemaker and author of very good dialogues in the manner of Lucian; Francis Sforza; Hans Sachs; Svendembourg; Iphicrates, and the Jew shoemaker who refused help to Christ, saying to Him, "Walk on!"'

This aspect of the subject is then left in order to consider the shoemaker's work, and here Borel describes for us every kind of footgear possible and impossible—stopping to regret the loss of the famous *botte à chaudron*, that enormous boot that came half way up the body, and served the horseman as receptacle, desk, and cupboard for carrying utensils, provisions, and fresh ammunition. We can well believe that Borel regretted the disappearance of such a picturesque article of wear.

He next proceeds to write what he calls *Philologie Humoristique* in the manner of Anatole France, and discusses the impossibility of reading *souliers de verre* in connection with Cinderella's slipper. In the Latin sources, he tells us, we shall find *calceus varius*, and not *calceus vitreus*, and yet at the *Opéra Comique* this *soulier vair* has degenerated into *soulier vert*—which is very good fooling.

In an article entitled 'Rêveries Ethnologiques' Borel regrets that we cannot trace man through the ages in the same way as we can nouns; this leads him to prove for us that the name Hetzel is the same as Attila, and this

name Attila, 'at which the world grew pale,' means nothing more than 'partridge.' At the conclusion of this article he says :—

'The mountains, believe us, will eternally bring forth a mouse. . . . Conquerors, revolutions, will never make anything else but philology. The end and the beginning of all things—is grammar.'

But in the eyes of Parisian editors there was a great fault in Borel's writings—his relentless pursuit of originality at all costs—even at that of puerility. Gradually his services became less and less in demand, and finally Borel found himself literally unable to obtain work in Paris. In 1846 Gautier obtained for him the post of inspector of colonisation in Algeria, whither he went accompanied by his wife and son. But even here ill-luck followed him, and for some reason (it is suggested on account of his persistence in drawing up his reports in verse) he was requested to tender his resignation. The last years of his life he spent working as a simple labourer, till in 1859, wearied out with his struggles, he allowed himself to die of hunger.

So passed away one of the most flamboyantly picturesque figures of literature.

It was well said by Baudelaire of Borel that he had

'a colour of his own, a savour *sui generis*; had he had only the charm of will, that in itself is a good deal! But he had an enormous love of letters, and nowadays we are surrounded by charming tractable poets who are quite ready to betray the muse for a mess of pottage.'

Equally true is Baudelaire's remark that without Borel there would be a gap in Romanticism.

Whence comes it then that Petrus Borel's tales are so little known? For this reason, that they are not a true picture of life. Balzac, speaking of one of George Sand's novels, wrote with great justice :—

'*Jacques*, Mme. Dudevant's last book, is a counsel to husbands who are a nuisance to their wives to kill themselves in order to set them free. This book is false from end to end. . . . All these authors build on unreality (*courent dans le vide*) founded on hollowness; there is nothing true. I prefer ogres, Tom Thumb, The Sleeping Beauty.'[1]

In Borel there is too much of the exaggerated, 'mystifying' side of Baudelaire, and it is that which, spite of all his talent, keeps him from holding a permanent place in our reading.

[1] *Lettres à l'Etrangère.*

V

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

CRITICS, speaking of Gautier in connection with Baudelaire, have said over and over again, 'Il rendit possible Baudelaire.' The *Fleurs du Mal* are dedicated to Gautier, and the standard edition appeared as it were under the protection of Gautier, ushered in by one of the best of his critical studies as Preface, and in which he speaks of his friendship with Baudelaire: 'A friendship was formed between us in which Baudelaire always kept up the attitude of a favourite disciple towards a sympathetic master.'

Thus in any study of the literary influences undergone by Baudelaire we may not absolutely neglect Gautier. But as soon as we come to study the question closely we see that the debt here is far from considerable.

Let us then seek resemblances between the two writers in the first place. Gautier said of himself:—

'I have spent my life in the pursuit of Beauty under all its Protean aspects, for the purpose of portraying it, and I have found it only in nature and art. Man is ugly, always and everywhere; he is only valuable in his intellect.' And he goes on to say: 'It is not nature that must be rendered, but the appearance, the physiognomy of nature. Therein lies all art.'

Baudelaire holds the same view; he writes in his *Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs*:—

'Eugène Delacroix once said to me: "Art is so delicate and so fugitive that our utensils are never clean enough, our means never sufficiently expeditious." It is the same with literature, and therefore I am not too great a partisan of nature; she disturbs the mirror of thought.'

Baudelaire's ideal of beauty is very high; neither he nor Gautier admire that accessible Beauty—the ideal of the man in the street. As Baudelaire says: 'I only ask for beauty, it is true, but for me she must be so perfect that I shall probably never meet her.'

Gautier, in so far as he was one of the leaders of the French Romantic movement is full of exotism. He says: 'We are not Frenchmen, we! we tend towards other races! We are full of nostalgic longings.'

The last sentence applies singularly well to the case of Baudelaire, who regards the world as one vast hospital, where each invalid is haunted by the desire to change the position of his bed.

We have seen, too, how Baudelaire's early travels bring an exotic note into his work; it is by this trait that he is connected with the Romantic school, and it is possible that Gautier also influenced him on this point.

In Gautier we have already a poet suffering from the Baudelairian ennui; it would perhaps be more correct to say from the Romantic ennui, which is not quite the same thing, since it springs from a different cause. We quote a good example of this humour from Gautier's 'Thébaïde':—

'Mon rêve le plus cher et le plus caressé,
Le seul qui rit encore à mon cœur oppressé,
C'est de m'ensevelir au fond d'une chartreuse,
Dans une solitude inabordable, affreuse;
Loin, bien loin, tout là-bas dans quelque sierra,
Bien sauvage, où jamais voix d'homme ne vibra.

De mon cœur dépeuplé je fermerais la porte,
Et j'y ferais la garde, afin qu'un souvenir
Du monde des vivants n'y pût pas revenir. . . .
Je suis las de la vie et ne veux pas mourir.
Mes pieds ne peuvent plus ni marcher ni courir . . .
. . . je suis une lampe sans flamme,
Et mon corps est vraiment le cercueil de mon âme.

Ne plus penser, ne plus aimer, ne plus haïr!
Si dans le coin du cœur il éclot un désir,
Lui couper sans pitié ses ailes de colombe,
Etre comme un cadavre étendu sous la tombe,

Dans l'immobilité savourer lentement,
Comme un philtre endormeur, l'anéantissement,
Voilà qui est mon vœu.

C'est pourquoi je m'assieds au revers du fossé,
Désabusé de tout, plus voûté, plus cassé
Que ces chiens mendiants que jusqu'à la porte
Le chien de la maison en grommelant escorte,
C'est pourquoi fatigué d'errer et de gémir,
Comme un petit enfant je demande à dormir,
Je veux dans le néant renouveler mon être,
M'isoler de moi-même et ne plus me connaître,
Et comme en un linceul, sans y laisser un pli,
Rester enveloppé dans mon manteau d'oubli.'

And here is quite a Baudelairian passage from 'La Mort dans la Vie':—

'Toute âme est un sépulcre où gisent mille choses,
Des cadavres hideux dans des figures roses
Dorment ensevelis.
On retrouve toujours les larmes sous le rire
Les morts sous les vivants et l'homme est à vrai dire
Une Nécropolis.'

It seems to us probable that what Baudelaire most admired in Gautier was the technical artist. Of the two poets whom we know him to have read and admired, Poe and Sainte-Beuve, neither could give Baudelaire any technical lesson. We have seen that he copied one or two of Poe's poetical tricks of expression; but in his poems Poe is only a second-rate artist, and also a poet of one nation does not learn technique from a poet of a foreign nation. Nor would Baudelaire find anything to copy, as regards form, in the poems of Sainte-Beuve, for, with the exception of Wordsworth (whom he admired), no poet has written more prosaic verse than the author of *Joseph Delorme*. What Baudelaire admired most in Gautier was the *poète impeccable*, the *parfait magicien ès lettres françaises*, and it is in this capacity that Gautier has some influence on Baudelaire.

Gautier declared that *l'inexprimable n'existe pas*, and Baudelaire is formulating the same theory when he writes:—

'There is in a word, in a verb, something sacred that forbids our making out of them a mere game of chance. The skilful handling of language is the practice of a suggestive kind of sorcery. For it is thus that colour speaks with deep and thrilling voice; that buildings stand up in sharp prominence on the depths of space; that the equivocal grimace of those animals and plants representative of ugliness and evil becomes articulate; that a perfume calls up its corresponding thought and recollection; that passion murmurs or roars in its ever changeless language.'

Having undertaken to distil the poetry of modern Parisian life, Baudelaire had recourse to Gautier as to the master-writer, who combined in his style relief and exactitude. Baudelaire first made his mark through the precision of his pictures; some of his poems (for example 'Don Juan') are absolute bas-reliefs. The curious thing is that it is not so much this side of Baudelaire that interests us to-day, but rather that other aspect—the Baudelaire of the *Invitation au Voyage*; not the subtle artist who gives us the sensation of the thing achieved, but rather he who gives us the impression of what lies beyond.

As for the art-for-art theory, if Baudelaire borrowed it from Gautier he also transformed it; for though in Baudelaire's work it leads him to love of artifice, he sees the limits of Gautier's theory. Touching this subject he wrote:—

'The puerile art-for-art theory by its exclusion of all ethics, and often even passion, was of necessity sterile. It put itself into fragrant contradiction with all the spirit of humanity. In the name of those higher principles which constitute universal life we have the right to declare it guilty of heterodoxy.'

And we have already quoted a vigorous passage on the danger of excessive consideration of *form*.

Baudelaire was always fascinated by the mystery of beauty: the exterior is for him only the closed window, whose charm lies in the conjectures to which it gives rise concerning what exists on the other side of the glass.

Gautier, on the contrary, cares only for the exterior; he

does not wish to penetrate into the interior; he tells us, 'I have always been very much affected by externals, that is why I avoid the society of old men.'

Unlike Baudelaire again, his wish is *que le soleil entre partout*, which is far from the Baudelairian ideal, which makes melancholy an inseparable attribute of beauty. A good example of Gautier's views on this subject is his 'Bûchers et Tombeaux':—

'Le squelette était invisible
Aux temps heureux de l'Art païen.
L'homme, sous la forme sensible,
Content du beau, ne cherchait rien.

Pas de cadavre sous la tombe,
Spectre hideux de l'être cher,
Comme d'un vêtement qui tombe,
Se déshabillant de sa chair. . . .

. . . l'art versait son harmonie
Sur la tristesse du tombeau.

Les tombes étaient attrayantes :
Comme on fait d'un enfant qui dort,
D'images douces et riantes
La vie enveloppait la mort.

La mort dissimulait sa face
Aux trous profonds, au nez camard,
Dont la hideur railleuse efface
Les chimères du cauchemar. . . .

Reviens, reviens, bel art antique,
De ton Paros étincelant
Couvrir ce squelette gothique ;
Dévore le bûcher brûlant !'

which is quite the contrary of Baudelairism.

Gautier said of himself: 'Je suis un homme pour qui le monde visible existe,' but, as Mr. Ransome well remarks, Baudelaire is a man 'pour qui le monde invisible existe,' and the truth of this holds for all the true Baudelairians, and this is the marked line that divides them from Théophile Gautier.

PART IV

POSTERITY

I

VILLIERS DE L'ISLE ADAM

We have now to pass on and consider the influence of Baudelaire on his posterity—we will study it first in France and then in England, and the first figure with whom we have to deal, following chronological order, is Villiers de l'Isle Adam.

Villiers de l'Isle Adam was born in Brittany at St. Brieuc in November 1838. He came to Paris in 1857, and by 1858 had already composed a volume of *Premières Poésies*, which, considering their author's age, are remarkable enough. Naturally, considering the period, there is an exotic note, and we find an 'Indian Prayer' with the motto dear to the Romantic 'foul is fair,' and are told therein of the powerful allegiance of good with evil :—

'A genoux, le brahmane
Dit en courbant le crâne
Près du fétiche noir :
Grave témoin du monde,
Brahmah, fais que je sonde,
Les oracles du soir.

Fais que ma course sainte
Ne trouve pas l'empreinte
De Sivah, dieu fatal,
Ni devant ton Silence
La puissante alliance
Du bien avec le mal.

Ni sur le roc sauvage
Le fils de l'esclavage,
Le paria tremblant,
Ni sur sa hutte impure,
Comme un hideux augure,
Le Vampire sanglant.'

In this early volume we find already that seeking for the key to the riddle of the universe which is a sign of the times—Villiers' great preoccupation.

A MON AMI AMÉDÉE LE MENDIANT

'Au moment de quitter son enfance fanée,
Quand l'homme voit soudain la terre moins ornée,
Le ciel plus inconnu,
Pour la première fois se penchant sur lui-même,
Il se pose en rêvant la question suprême :
" Pourquoi suis-je venu ? "

Ah ! pauvre matelot ! Loin des bords de la vie,
Tu t'arrêtes, cherchant quelle route a suivie
Ta barque au sillon bleu.
Mais le flot sourd l'entraîne, et sans cesse l'égare
Dans la brume des mers, le Destin, sombre phare,
Soulève un doigt de feu.

Derrière lui, bien loin, presque sur les rivages,
Déjà le rameur voit voltiger des images
Aux fronts purs et voilés :
Une mère, une sœur, même la fiancée. . . .
Parfois il se souvient qu'une terre glacée
Clôt leurs yeux étoilés.

Et ce sont les adieux d'autrefois : les mains blanches
Qui lui serraient la main ; les baisers sous les branches,
Et les jeunes amours. . . .
Mais pour voguer plus seul vers de plus vastes plages,
En détournant la tête il déchire les pages
Du livre de ses jours.

Alors c'est la tempête aux souvenirs funèbres,
Le malheur, près de lui nageant dans les ténèbres,
Le suit comme un ami ;

Et fermant ses yeux las, si le marin sommeille,
Le malheur vient s'asseoir au gouvernail et veille
Sur son homme endormi.

Il nous faut bien lutter contre l'homme et l'espace,
Car perdus tous, parmi la tourmente qui passe
En courant dans les cieux,
Pour supporter le poids des communes misères,
Au lieu de s'entr'aider, tous les humains, ces frères
Se haïssent entre eux.

Les uns, insouciants, dans leurs manteaux se couchent
Et s'en vont. Il en est dont les barques se touchent. . .
A deux on est plus fort,
Et cherchant dans l'amour un refuge suprême,
Seuls ils voguent en paix sans effroi ni blasphème,
Vers l'insondable port.

Mais celui qui regarde, intrépide et tranquille,
Les hommes et les flots, à qui la mer stérile
Toujours offre un écueil,
Il s'y dresse en silence et lutte solitaire
Toute voile pour lui n'est au fond qu'un suaire,
Tout esquif qu'un cercueil. . . .

Seul alors le vieillard abandonnant la voile
Livre aux flots de l'oubli cette mer sans étoile,
Sa nef aux mâts brisés. . . .
Jusqu'à l'heure où, laisant tomber au fond de l'urne
Un sablier de plus, le Destin taciturne
Dans l'ombre dit : "Assez."

L'onde parle tout bas aux rives qu'elle effleure,
Et l'on entend toujours, sur l'Océan qui pleure,
Le vent sombre qui fuit ;
Et chaque aurore vient éclairer, ô mystère !
Les chants insoucieux des enfants de la Terre
Qui partent pour la Nuit ! '

In ' Lama Sabactanni,' we find the same characteristic reflections on human destiny :—

'Que fait-il ici bas?—Oublier et souffrir!—
Est-ce vivre, ignorer la raison de sa vie,
Et sans savoir pourquoi, hors d'un néant chassé,
Marcher dans un exil, seul, triste et délaissé,
Où sa fierté d'archange, à jamais avilie
Se traîne sous le poids de sa mélancolie!
Où, parce qu'il naquit, au hasard, dispersé
Selon le coin de terre appelé la patrie,
Il doit—fantôme obscur de crime et de folie—
Changer de conscience en changeant de passé!
Et toujours et toujours allumer pour lui-même
Le flambeau d'un *Peut-être*, incertain et suprême? . . .
A l'heure de la mort, fatigué d'abandon,
S'il se tourne vers Toi, Dieu calme du pardon,
Est-ce parcequ'il croit?—Le dernier mot du Doute
C'est la voix qui murmure à son oreille: "Ecoute!
Ce fut peut-être un Dieu: C'est peut-être un Sauveur."
—Car nous avons le Doute enfoncé dans le cœur.'

And he is led to regret that he was not born in another age:—

'Si j'avais pu venir au monde,
Aux premiers jours de l'univers,
Quand sur la beauté découverte
Eve promenait son œil bleu,
Quand la terre était jeune et verte
Et quand l'homme croyait en Dieu.'

In Paris he soon became acquainted with Baudelaire, and gradually a great and lasting friendship formed itself between the two poets. Villiers was one of the few friends who remained with Baudelaire through the last tragic two years of his life.

There are extant three letters from Villiers to Baudelaire. We quote them in proof of the enthusiasm with which he regarded the poet of the *Fleurs du Mal.*

'Fancy my not saying in answer to M. R. when he asked me what you had created: "What do you understand by creation? Who is he who creates or does not create?"

'What is the point of this hackneyed, old as the hills, expression? Baudelaire is the most powerful and consequently the most

consistent of the distressful thinkers of this miserable century. He strikes, he is living, he sees! So much the worse for those who do not see!'

The second letter goes even further:—

'When I open your volume of an evening and read again your magnificent lines whose every word is a fierce mockery, the more I read them the more I find to reconstruct. How beautiful what you do is! *La Vie Antérieure*, *l'Allégorie des Vieillards*, *la Madone*, *les Petites Vieilles*, *la Chanson de l'Après-Midi*, and that *tour de force*, *la Mort des Amants* in which you apply your musical theories. *L'Irrémédiable* with the hegelian depth of its opening, the *Squelettes laboureurs*, and the sublime bitterness of *Réversibilité*, in fact everything up to *Abel et Caïn*. . . . All that you know is regal. Sooner or later its humanity and greatness absolutely must be recognised. . . . But what an eulogy is the laughter of those who are incapable of respect! Do not be annoyed with my enthusiasm; you know well that it is sincere.'

In a later letter he offers Baudelaire a little legend translated from the Latin, and which reminded him of Baudelaire's 'L'Etranger.' Here it is:—

'There was once a monk who had made a pact with the devil: I mean he had accepted the services of a kind of demon. This demon, in spirit, was not of the guiltiest. At the time of that terrible strife he had followed where Lucifer led vaguely, almost like a sheep. He had not pronounced his views on the famous *non serviam*, and had found himself banished from joy and light almost before he had time to realise it. So that his life became a kind of dream, and he no longer knew what had happened. He was not wicked, but he had contracted the fall-mania, seeing the mass of dark legends knocking up against one another in the darkness of the crowd. Then with the passing of the long interminable centuries, he had forgotten that—all that he had forgotten. . . . So one day he noticed Earth, and finding it as comfortable to stay there as in the other places where he was before, he went into the neighbourhood of a monastery—for he was fond of quiet. There somehow or other he once was useful to the old abbé. The old abbé, who was a good fellow, at once saw (with all the necessary reserves of conscience) what an appalling misfortune must have

happened far back in eternity to this demoniac little fellow, and he did not rain forth curses on his melancholy ghostly guest. He asked, for he did not want to be behindhand with such a person, if he, in his turn, could not help him or please him in some way. He pressed the question on seeing the demon sadly shake what served him as a head.

'"Well then," said the latter, "since you ask me I will tell you that you can do something for me."

'"How?" asked the monk.

'"Ah," said the demon, "have you the power to build a belfry here?"

'"Yes," said the monk.

'"Then have a belfry built, with a great bell, and then have it rung at night when you can."

'"Why?" said the monk anxiously.

'"I love bells—the sound of bells . . . beautiful bells."'

No one at that period could come into real contact with Baudelaire without being introduced by him to the works of Poe, and Villiers could not fail to be attracted by writings which from one point of view showed distinct affinities with his own ideas.

But, as a matter of fact, Villiers learnt little from Poe. The puerile use and abuse of italics and capitals is certainly a trick learnt from Poe. Certain of the *Contes Cruels* remind us of the tales of Poe, a sometimes gratuitous profusion of physically horrible detail—such as the descriptions of torture in *L'Aventure de Tse-i-la*, and the superhuman character of his men, and particularly of his women. Resemblance does not always postulate imitation, and if Villiers copied Poe he is vindicated in that he surpassed his model. *Catalina*, *La Torture par l'Espérance*, both Poësque, are sufficient proof of this statement. Poe was interested in effects of the terrible, and deals often in the physically horrible to produce these effects. The idea of death occupied Poe to the length of becoming an obsession, but the mysticism of Villiers opens up for him a field of speculation far

wider than the philosophy of Poe. Villiers is in this way a greater artist than Poe.

The impression created by Villiers in Paris seems to have been a curious one. He was of the race of insatiable talkers—to the point of boring his hearers, who, nevertheless, found it worth while to note down his ideas and appropriate them for their own uses. He had not the consolation as Poe had, as Baudelaire had, of even a small clique of admirers. His was indeed a sad life, he lived in great poverty, *Axel* was written in a garret, and, more often than not, on an empty stomach. It was only at the end of his life that things began to brighten, when periodicals began to seek his work, and he made a tour in Belgium—unlike Baudelaire—with success. Still, he died in the hospital of the brethren Saint Jean de Dieu, whither he had been transferred on the recommendation of Huysmans, apparently little missed of the literary world, in 1889.

It is small surprise to us then to be told by François Coppée that Villiers spoke but little of himself and how he lived.

'He seemed to live in a dream,' says Coppée, 'and only came forth from it to read us a few pages of peculiar and magnificent prose, or more rarely of poetry, or to delight us with his rare gifts as a musician.'

We can only hope that by 'living in a dream' he was really able to forget his sordid present.

The work of Villiers de l'Isle Adam falls naturally into two classes, according as they are the outcome of the two contrasting tempers of his mind—lyric and ironic.

In the first humour he is a great idealist, above all a dreamer. For him, as for his Claire Lenoire,

'to dream . . . is in the first place to forget the omnipotence of inferior minds, a thousand times more abject than Foolishness! It is to cease to hear the irremediable cries of those who are eternally despoiled! 'Tis to forget the humiliations that every one undergoes,

and which you call social life! It is to forget those so-called duties which revolt conscience, and are no other than the love of baser immediate interests in whose name it is permitted to remain heedless of the misery of the disinherited. It is to contemplate in the depths of one's thoughts an occult world of which external realities are scarcely even the reflection. It is to reinforce our invisible hope in Death—who already approaches. It is to collect one's self in the Imperishable! It is to feel one's self solitary but eternal! 'Tis to love ideal Beauty, freely—as the rivers flowing to the sea! And all other pastimes or duties are not worth a sunny day in these accursed times in which I am forced to live. At bottom to dream is to die, to die at least in silence and with a something of heaven in one's eyes.'

This dreamer carried to the highest pitch the Baudelairian 'detached' attitude towards life. He compares himself to a member of the audience at a theatre who is not interested by the play, and only stays it out from courtesy to his neighbour, whom he would otherwise disturb: 'Ainsi je vivais par politesse,' he says. And the aid to staying out the play lies, as we have seen, in his dreams and in his Art.

In the same way he has all the Baudelairian hatred of democracy, and of all that democracy loves. Thus his ideal of Art is high—its essential quality lies in its being exceptional. It is this that leads him to paint exceptional men and women, with exceptional names, and surrounded by exceptional landscape. Commonplace is, for him, the unforgiveable sin, as he says: 'The only beings who deserve the name of Artist are the creators, those who call up intense, unknown and sublime impressions.'

Any art into which a hint of imitation enters is, in his eyes, at once inferior. Music was his passion; Wagner perhaps his greatest enthusiasm (he was himself no mean performer in a Wagnerian style of improvisation on the piano); but the art of the virtuoso-musician calls forth from him the scathing remark, 'Quelle odeur de singes!'

Villiers' art is indeed exceptional—therein perhaps lies the reason of the neglect of his work till this day. He was almost exclusively occupied with ideas; well might *he* have said: 'I love to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my Reason to an *O altitudo.*' And he cared little whether the particular mystery which engrossed him would interest the public whom, nevertheless, he expected to read his writings.

But the mysteries he loves to pursue are not the puzzles of the everyday material life, but of those which exist in the realms of thought. 'Mind is the foundation of the universe,' is his doctrine, from which follows his great saying, 'Understanding is the reflected light of creation.'

His philosophy is perhaps most clearly enunciated by Maître Janus in *Axel.* We quote his words:—

'Know then once for all that there is for thee no other universe than that very conception of it which is reflected in thine inmost thoughts, for thou canst not wholly see it, nor know it, nor even distinguish a single point of it, just exactly as this mysterious point must be in reality. . . . Truth herself is but a wayward conception made by the race in which thou passest by, and which lends to Totality the forms of its mind. Wouldst thou possess her? Create her!—just as anything else. . . .

'Thou art thy future creator. Thou art a God who feigns to forget his whole essence only that he may the better realise its brilliance. For that which thou callest the universe is nothing but the result of this pretence of which the secret is in thee. Escape then from this gaol-world, thou offspring of prisoners. Free thyself from this doom of Becoming!

'Thy Truth shall be that which thou hast conceived: is not its essence as infinite as thyself? Take courage then to bring it forth most radiant, that is to choose it thus. . . . But decide that it is hard to become a God again—and pass into nothingness: for this very thought, if thou dwellest upon it, becomes base, it contains a sterile hesitation.'

Such were the speculations that gained a hold over

Villiers. There is no limit to such thought once the philosopher enters on it, and these speculations may be said even to have tormented him; he has all the restless curiosity of Baudelaire and Sainte-Beuve. When he says in *Claire Lenoire*,

'Nevertheless, I am forced to confess—I am the victim of an hereditary disease which has long baffled the effects of my reason and my will! It consists in an *apprehension*, an ANXIETY, in a word, a DREAD, that seizes upon me like a convulsion, making me realise all the bitterness of a sharp, infernal restlessness,'

it is a statement of his own case. 'Cursed are the dreamers,' he says in the same work.

'Vanity of Vanities' is his chosen theme. *Axel* is the story of a young girl who from desire of worldly power refuses to take up the life of the cloister, and of a young man who is obsessed by the desire for gold. But when these two meet the desire of love in them conquers all else, and since they now understand the futility of all desires, they choose death — the one thing perfectly obtainable.

Or to take another example from 'Akedysseril.' This queen from political reasons has decided on the death of a young royal couple. Her heart, however, was touched at the sight of their mutual devotion, and she gives the order to an old priest that their death shall take place in such a wise that they shall in it be at the height of joy. She afterwards discovers that the old priest separated the two lovers, and that they met their death each alone—longing for the other. In her anger she enters the forbidden temple, seeks out the priest and pours the torrent of her wrath upon him. Then the priest explains to her that these two did indeed die in the greatest pleasure, not disillusioned, and cherishing always the hope of meeting again,—an unrealised hope being the greatest gift of life, since realisation is ever imperfect.

This is very bald analysis. The story is magnificently told; it is perhaps the finest thing that Villiers has done.

So much then for Villiers the dreamer. On the other hand is deep distrust of the cant of progress. His conviction that science, with all its advances, does nothing towards raising the level of public morality, led him to meet his adversaries on this question with that finest of all weapons—irony. This is the temper of such tales as *L'héroïsme du docteur Hallidontil*, the story of the doctor who shoots the patient he has miraculously cured in order to discover the working of the cure for the benefit of the future race, showing his *amour exclusif de l'humanité au parfait mépris de l'individu présent.*

He is a veritable master of irony—such stories as *L'Aventure de Tse-i-la*, *Les Demoiselles de Bienfilatre*, *Le Secret d'Ardiane* (suggested by Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Bonheur dans le crime*), *L'Incomprise* are unsurpassed of their kind. Indeed, it is in the shorter tales that the irony is the more telling. *L'Eve Future* is his longest effort in this realm, and is a development of Hoffmann's idea of the human doll worked up into a volume of 375 pages to prove Villiers' Baudelairian thesis of the futility of scientific progress. *Claire Lenoire* is one of the best known of this class, with its conversations on the futility of science, its relentless pushing of her theories to their logical conclusion, its supernatural ending—and here, it is interesting to note that, to the supernatural of which Villiers learnt the charm from Poe, he adds a moral note which is entirely lacking in Poe.

Poe forgets our world entirely; Villiers, on the other hand, sees in this world the waiting-room of the unknown, whence he will pass to revelation. It is the Catholic conception which is without its counterpart in the American writer. Though assailed by doubts, and saddened by his conviction of the vanity of human wishes, Villiers kept

his faith, and these lines from his *Premières Poésies* could have been as sincerely penned in his last years :—

> 'Si nous n'aimons plus rien, pas même nos jeunesses,
> Si nos cœurs sont remplis d'inutiles tristesses,
> S'il ne nous reste rien ni des Dieux ni des Rois,
> Comme un dernier flambeau, gardons au moins la Croix !'

Rivarol says somewhere, 'L'impiété est une indiscrétion.' One might say the same of irony when considering the writer in his relation with his contemporary period ; therein, perhaps, is the reason of Villiers' lack of success. Or perhaps it is as he himself says :—

'Lorsque le front seul contient l'existence d'un homme, cet homme n'est éclairé qu'au-dessus de la tête, alors son ombre jalouse renversée toute droite au-dessous de lui, l'attire par les pieds pour l'entraîner dans l'Invisible.'

Anatole France said of him : 'He passed like a dreamer through life, blind to what we saw and seeing what we could not see.'

And in conclusion let us quote the words of *Claire Lenoire* :—

'There are beings who are acquainted with the paths of life, and are curious about the paths of death, and these, for whom the reign of the Spirit should come, look down upon the passing of the years, for they hold possession of the Eternal.'

They may serve as epitaph.

II

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY

BARBEY D'AUREVILLY was an exceedingly prolific writer. His writings range over a varied field: he is critic, novelist, ecclesiastical historian, and historian of Beau Brummel. M. Charles Buet described him as a 'true soldier of the pen . . . ever with drawn sword and hat on head.'

His most important works are *L'Amour Impossible* (1841), *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummel* (1845), *Une vieille Maîtresse* (1851), *Les Prophètes du Passé* (1851), *L'Ensorcelée* (1854), *Le Chevalier Destouches* (1864), *Rythmes oubliés* (1858), *Un Prêtre Marié* (1864), *Les Diaboliques* (1874), etc.

His numerous critical articles have been collected in the *Quarante Médaillons de l'Académie* (1863), and *Les Œuvres et les Hommes*. He also from time to time contributed poems to various reviews; his poetical work was not collected till after his death. He wrote of it in a letter to Trébutien of 1851 :—

'I like to keep little poems, which are like sentimental dates in my life. You show them to twenty-five people of whom you are fond, and that is all. At least in my case that will be all.'

And again he refers to them as

'those heart-wrung poems, better suited perhaps to a setting of obscurity and mystery than to the kindled glowing lamp of commentary.'

Something of Alfred de Vigny's stoicism has passed into these poems.

'Si tu pleures jamais, que ce soit en silence !
Si l'on te voit pleurer, essuie au moins tes pleurs'

is his doctrine. He expresses it again in these lines :—

'Saigne, saigne mon cœur, saigne plus lentement.
Prends garde ! on t'entendrait . . . saigne dans le silence,
Comme un cœur épuisé qui déjà saigna tant
A bout de sang et de souffrance.

Quand parmi les sans-cœur, pauvre cœur, je te traine,
Sous mon froc étriqué tu saignes dans la nuit,
Les six lignes de chair de la poitrine humaine
Pourraient trahir ton faible bruit.

Mais je ne permets pas aux hommes de la foule
Insolents, curieux de tout cruel destin,
De t'approcher, cœur fier, pour entendre en mon sein
Dégoutter ton sang qui s'écoule.

Saigne, saigne, mon cœur . . . j'étoufferai l'haleine
Qui pourrait à l'odeur révéler le martyr !
Saigne et meurs, cœur maudit, . . . car la Samaritaine
Manque à jamais pour te guérir.'

If you would understand the character of Barbey d'Aurevilly's work there is a great English novelist—not long dead—who should be read and compared, George Gissing. These two authors who are so different (that is just why we put their names side by side) seem to have sought the same kind of pleasure in letters.

For both of them life was infinitely painful ; both were athirst for violent exaggerated emotions.

Gissing required from his Nether World, wherein the women are savage, the men brutal, and human intelligence stunted, his *revenge* and at the same time his freedom.

His revenge : for he never hid his hatred of the poor and their life.

His freedom : because, by dint of describing the sordid existence he knew so well, he produced a state of excitement which raised him above reality.

In the same way literature was to Barbey d'Aurevilly a

marvellous opium which consoled him for the tricks of fate. But whilst Gissing is determined to show the disagreeable side, the blots of society, Barbey d'Aurevilly (and herein as wrong as Gissing) plunges into orgies of pictures, and violent inventions which terrify the reader.

And yet nothing can be less artificial than these novels. Whether Barbey d'Aurevilly evoke the scarred face of an unreal *abbé de la Croix-Jugan*, whether he describe the ultra-excessive passions of a Ryno de Marigny, whether Gissing create the character of Biffen in New Grub Street, both authors have gained their end, that is, the expansion of their true personality. *They have been really themselves.*

It was Stendhal who wrote to Balzac those pregnant words: 'I take a character well known to myself; I leave him the habits he has contracted in the art of going every morning to hunt for happiness, *then I give him more wit.*'

That is just what these two novelists have done.

As an English critic[1] has said, 'Gissing's men and women think.' Gissing has given them his mind.

In the same way Barbey d'Aurevilly lent his imagination to all the people he created. This is easily explained when we know the circumstances of the French writer. As quite a child he lived in the old Norman town of Valognes, and knew some survivors of the wars of the Chouans. And out of *their* recollections and his own imagination Barbey wrote his *Ensorcelée* and his *Chevalier des Touches.*

In the same way having known provincial French society of after Waterloo, young royalists on the one hand, old veterans on the other, he wrote his *Bonheur dans le Crime*, his *Dîner d'Athées*, and his *Dessous de Cartes d'une partie de whist.*[2]

[1] *Times*, Literary Supplement, January 11, 1912.

[2] He said himself, 'Life, passionate life with its successive disgust, could never make him forget these childish impressions.'

Barbey d'Aurevilly presents a curious combination of contrasts. In the first place materially. This lover of beauty in all things, the historian of Brummel, and who would be the greatest of 'Dandys,' was precluded by his poverty from gratifying this desire.

The second is a contrast of mind—he alternates between the most fervent Catholicism on the one hand, which leads him to produce *Un Prêtre Marié*, and on the other a curious impiety which makes him write *Les Diaboliques*. These two attitudes are not meant to include the whole of d'Aurevilly's writings. At his greatest he is as great as Balzac, for example in his novels *La vieille Maîtresse* and *Le Chevalier des Touches*.

It is the first attitude—the attitude of fervent Catholicism—which is the sincere one. He constituted himself defender of the faith to the point of composing the apology for the Inquisition. Everything now springs from Catholicism he tells us:—

'We have arrived at such an advanced point in history that there is nowhere anything profound outside Catholicism. The various succeeding civilisations have so shaken the human soul that all which was only on the surface has fallen away. After Shakespeare, whose religion is unknown—who worshipped Saturn perhaps, we do not know—indifferent to everything like Goethe, after Shakespeare and Goethe, these soothsayers who probed the entrails of the human victim as far as the knife could go—there is really nothing save Catholicism that can teach us anything about the human heart. Outside Catholicism is neither philosophy nor poetry. There are only tilters against style, more or less successful wrestlers with language, technical but uninspired artists. . . . In poetry, ethics, or the human heart, there is nothing to look for outside Catholicism, any more than in politics, government, or social science. Before it, there is only the stammering and the rudimentary, already corrupt movements of human nature. Behind it I can only see Barbarity, a Barbarity easily victorious over a civilisation that has not even sufficient will to defend itself.'

And in the Preface of *La vieille Maîtresse* he returns to

the subject—the virtue of Catholicism is its acceptance of everything :—

'What is morally and intellectually magnificent in Catholicism is that it is broad, comprehensive, immense; that it embraces the whole of human nature and its diverse spheres of activity, and that above all that it embraces it inscribes its maxim "Cursed are the scandalised!" There is nothing prudish, squeamish, pedantic nor troublesome about Catholicism. It leaves all that to false virtue, to shorn puritanism. Catholicism loves the arts and accepts their audacities without flinching. It accepts their passions and their pictures, because it knows that a lesson can be drawn from them, even when the artist himself does not draw it.

'. . . To paint what *is*, to seize upon human reality, be it crime or virtue, to make it live through the all-powerfulness of inspiration and form, to show reality, vivify it till it reaches the ideal, that is the artist's mission. From the Catholic point of view artists are on a lower plane than ascetics, but they are not ascetics: they are artists. Catholicism hierarchises merit, but does not mutilate man.

'Each of us has the vocation of his faculties. The artist is not *a police inspector of ideas*. When he has created a reality by painting it, he has accomplished his task. Let us not ask more of him!'

His long novel *Un Prêtre Marié* is the highest development of his Catholic temper with its study of the consequences of the priest's sin.

Barbey d'Aurevilly is a perfect example of that Baudelairian state of mind, of which we have already spoken, wherein a fervid Catholic finds delight in a pose of sacrilege.

For suddenly he turns away from his sincere Catholic attitude, and sets to work to write his *Diaboliques* with the direct aim of writing something more or less scandalous. In the Preface, he wrote of these tales :—

'Of course with their title of *Diaboliques* they do not pretend to be a prayer book nor *Christian Imitation*. They are written, however, by a moralist who is a Christian, but who prides himself on true, even though very bold, observation, and who believes—

such is his theory of poetry—that a powerful painter may paint everything, and that his painting is always moral enough when it is *tragic*, and gives a horror of what it draws. Now the author of this book, who believes in the Devil and his influence, does not laugh about it, and only relates these things to pure minds to terrify them. When any one has read these *Diaboliques*, I do not believe he will feel disposed to begin them in reality. Therein lies all the morality of a book.'

But we repeat that as Barbey d'Aurevilly penned these tales he delighted in the idea of the scandal they would create, and it is from this point of view that they are interesting, as another example of the psychological phenomenon of the delight obtained from treading on forbidden ground.

It is a moment of extravagances, and d'Aurevilly does not hesitate to indulge in them. His women are always superhuman creatures.

In the first story, *Le Rideau Cramoisi*, we are face to face with one of these ; it is she who makes the first advance, and she who takes all the risks—and the consequences. The impression we carry away of this story is that of Rops' illustration.

In the second story, *Le Bonheur dans le Crime* ! there is another example of the same type. This time it is a woman who takes up the rôle of fencing-master or maid-servant as occasion arises, till she can accomplish the murder of the wife of the man she loves, and then live happily with him 'ever after.' Or think of his *Pudica* (*A un Dîner d'Athées*), who hid the most refined complication of vice under the most innocent exterior ; or that other woman in *La Vengeance d'une Femme*, who, to be revenged on the husband she hated, while bearing his great name, dragged herself through the deepest mire of shame, and in dishonouring his name found her satisfaction.

All those who knew d'Aurevilly testify to the blame-

lessness of his life—his wickedness was all pose. M. Anatole France believes that when St. Peter saw him arrive at the gate of heaven, he summed him up in these words :—

'He wanted to have every vice, but he was unable to do so, because that 's very difficult, and you need special talents for it; he would have wished to cover himself with crimes because crime is picturesque, but he remained the best fellow on earth, and his life was almost monastic. He said some horrid things sometimes it 's true, but as he didn't believe them, and didn't make any one else believe them, it was never anything but literature, and the fault is pardonable.'

So much then for one great Baudelairian feature of d'Aurevilly's writings. There are others.

Baudelaire wrote at the end of a passage on Beauty (which we have already quoted): 'I can hardly conceive of a type of Beauty in which there is no hint of sorrow.'

If d'Aurevilly does not go quite so far as this yet, for him, too, Beauty is greatly enhanced when accompanied by an idea of the great mystery of suffering.

'*The* mystery, the eternal mystery,' he writes in *Amaidée*,[1]

'is sorrow—that angel with flaming sword who drives us from the world to the desert, from life to Nature, and who sits at the entrance to our soul to prevent us from entering if we do not wish to perish.'

And the sign of this mystery is one of the points of his Amaidée's beauty. Amaidée is not in her first youth :—

'Like ourselves she has drunk at the sources of things. The first garland of her days is faded and has fallen into the torrent that bears it away, and the track of sorrow is marked deep on her brow, like that of a cart which has passed along the road. To me, this

[1] Cp. the verse introduction to this work :—

'Notre âme affamée, hélas! n'est assouvie
Que de souffle et de pleurs ensemble ou tour à tour.'

attestation writ upon a face that life has not gone altogether well, is the highest beauty. Any woman who has suffered is more than fair in my eyes. She is a Saint. Sorrow! Sorrow! Most marvellous of spells. You are mingled with the one love of my soul, in my worship of Nature. I feel more devotion for her on those days when she seems to suffer. I love her more distressful than all powerful.'

In Barbey d'Aurevilly also we find once more a mind in no way impressed by the modern talk of progress.

'What is more absurd than Progress,' he exclaims, 'since man, as is proved by everyday facts, always resembles, is always equal to, man, that is to say, still in the savage state. What are the perils of forest or prairie besides the daily shocks and conflicts of civilisation? Whether man entrap a dupe upon the boulevard, or run through his victim in unknown forests, is he not eternally man, that is to say, the most perfect beast of prey?'

And elsewhere he rails once more against this pretension of further civilisation :—

'Each century has its words which are worn threadbare. The eighteenth century had "sensibility," and you know how *sensible* was that century which invented the guillotine through this "sensibility." We who are more manly, we have "civilisation," and we are civilised in about the same way as the eighteenth-century folk were sensitive.'

A côté de la Grande Histoire.

In Barbey d'Aurevilly, too, we find a dreamy 'animism' which is again a Baudelairian feature, and which leads in him to the creation of some very beautiful figures. Take, for example, this of the rain in Normandy: 'Are we not in Normandy, the fair Pluviosa who has beautiful cold tears on her beautiful cool cheeks? I have seen women weeping like this.' Or this of buildings: 'What you must look at in buildings is their gesture.' Or this of the wind in the trees: 'Il sabrait les ormes avec un bancal et leur hâchait leur beau visage de verdure nuancée.'

Or, again, this description from the *Memoranda* :—

'He slashed the elms with his sabre, lacerating the fair shadows of their green leafy faces.'

'Went up to-night to look at my old favourite the St. James's Bridge. Night is kind to the disfigured. Turned round by the *rue de Bernicrès* in the middle of the bridge. The water was as black as the water of a lagoon, and on this jet surface trembled the light of a street lamp flickering in the wind—a star a hand's breadth above my head. The willows at the corners of the bridge drew their hoods over their heads like tired sleepers. Not a passer-by on the bridge nor in the street, not a window near lit up, nothing but dampness, darkness, immobility and silence. You heard nothing save every now and then the crisp click of the ivory billiard balls striking against one another in a neighbouring café.'

The same happy figures recurred in his conversation, such as those which M. Anatole France records :—

'Vous savez cet homme qui se met en espalier sur son mur—au soleil.' 'Je me suis enroué en écoutant cette dame.'

'J'ai aimé deux morts dans ma vie. . . .'

But to return to the dreamy imagination—we find this at its Baudelairian height in those poems in prose (of which the form is copied from Baudelaire), and which d'Aurevilly named *Rythmes oubliés*. Take, for instance, that piece wherein he develops the comparison of Insomnia to two great eyes, which is as powerful as anything in Poe :—

'It was one of those nights that we have, you and I,—you down in your solitary cell, oak-lined like a coffin, and I in a still sadder place, for the room I dwell in is my heart.'

Then Insomnia came and sat beside him,

'and began to watch me with its great mournful pale eyes, those eyes open so immeasurably wide, which through some implacable magnetism dilate the eyes which look in them and forbid their closing. So despairing were these pale eyes. So despairing and so fixed, in their inherent fixity there was something so devoured, so eaten up and yet so *inconsumable*; one felt strongly that, spite of their pale dust-like colour, they burned the more fiercely within in a secret agony, that one was really astonished that Albert Dürer had not put a similar expression on the forehead of Atlas, weighed down by his terrible melancholy.'

The impression becomes so strong that the would-be sleeper at last lights his lamp, and yet still he sees these terrible eyes :—

'Dead stars but still visible, they remained, tenacious as an evil dream, in the golden light as well as in darkness. And I saw only them, and I forgot to what head they belonged, for they were so great they seemed alone! And I said to myself "Strange sight! Is Insomnia then but the gaze of two great eyes?" Night passed on. The hours fled by—those cowardly Immortals who always take to flight, and as they leave us aim a last Parthian arrow at our hearts, already so full of them. The lamp went out, and in the black curtain of darkness that once more covered the walls, the nocturnal monster's pale eyes opened steadily wider and wider their two vast orbs till morning, when they disappeared as if their ever widening lids had rolled back like living blinds, one into the mournful pink of the ceiling, the other into the threadbare violet of the carpet.'

And finally comes the inevitable comparison :—

'Insomnia is like life, our nights are like our days. . . . Cameleon eyes of youth's Insomnia, you are like the other inanimate eyes we contemplate in life, that long vigil of day which is so slow to end!'

And when life is not Insomnia it is but dreams. D'Aurevilly would say with Maître Janus of Villiers de l'Isle Adam: 'Of what can one live but of unrealised dreams and ignoble hopes always deceived,' or in his own words from his famous *Laocoon* :—

'O Laocoon, Laocoon! We know thee. We have trembled often enough at the cry of thy mute bronze. We know thee, Laocoon! Art thou not more terribly sculptured in our own flesh than in the bronze of the greatest sculptors? Are we not all Laocoons in life? Have we not all of us our serpents stealing out from the blue sea to seize us—like thee, Laocoon—at the very moment of a fine sacrifice, at the joyous foot of some altar? . . .

'Our sons, Laocoon, are our thoughts, our hopes, our dreams, our love, fallen victims to destiny before us, prey of those dread serpents who glide into our life unnoticed till they glide into our hearts and we have no time to escape.

'And to us, even as to thee Laocoon, the blood of our sacrificed dreams seems more cruel, more venomous than any other poison poured into our wounds. We are all fathers of something that we have to see die before us.'

It is this side of d'Aurevilly—the pure poet apart from the novelist or philosopher—which seems to justify the words of Octave Lézanne :—

'D'Aurevilly was for those who came into contact with him the most miraculous sower of jewels, and of beauties, the most dazzling weaver of those suns one had believed deadened. He was overflowing with ideas, paradoxes, anecdotes, morality, deep philosophy. How shall we describe his influence? He made one marvel, astounded one, one went to him as to the last knight-errant of literary faith, the last convinced apostle of the Religion of Letters.'

M. Bourget in his penetrating study of this novelist writes : 'His poetry is as near that of the English as his Normandy is to England. I remember,' continues M. Bourget, 'how on a journey I made in a straight line from Caen to Weymouth by way of Cherbourg in August 1882, I was struck by the extraordinary resemblance of the scenery in the two countries. Does this resemblance extend to minds? I should be inclined to believe it, seeing how near the dream of a Shakespeare or of a Carlyle is to the dream of a pure Norman like M. d'Aurevilly.'

These lines give rise to a kind of emotion in us—there is, as it were, a pre-established harmony, a kind of *entente cordiale* arranged in the past ages between great writers of France and England.

III

VERLAINE

PAUL VERLAINE was born in Metz in the year 1844, though when he was seven years old the family came to live in Paris. Verlaine himself tells us that his childhood was a happy one. In his *Poètes Maudits*, where he criticises himself under the anagram of Pauvre Lélian, he says: 'Son enfance avait été heureuse. Des parents exceptionnels, un père exquis, une mère charmante le gâtaient en enfant unique qu'il était.' And later on he refers in verse to his childhood :—

> '. . . Mon enfance, elle fut joyeuse ;
> Or je naquis choyé, béni,
> Et je crûs, chair insoucieuse
> Jusqu'au temps du trouble infini.'

He early showed a talent for drawing ('I was ceaselessly in pursuit of forms, colours, shadows') and an insatiable appetite for reading, devouring every book that came within his reach. *Les Fleurs du Mal* he read in his schoolroom, hiding the book under the lid of his desk. He intended on leaving school to continue his law studies, but the Bohemian life of the young man of letters had already appealed to him, and by the time he was twenty his first volume of poems (*Poèmes Saturniens*) had appeared, and law was put aside. For the next three years Verlaine lived a fairly riotous life, and then came a calm period, when he fell under the influence of Mademoiselle Mautet, step-sister of the musician Charles

d'Ivry, and who became his wife. This is the period of the volume of poems called *La Bonne Chanson* of which Verlaine said, 'I have always had a predilection for this poor little volume into which the whole of a purified heart was put'; and of which the temper may be judged by the following lines:—

'La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois,
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée.'

'La dure épreuve va finir,
Mon cœur sourit à l'avenir,
Ils sont passés, les jours d'alarmes,
Où j'étais triste jusqu'aux larmes.'

But this optimism was but short lived.

'Le Bonheur a marché côte à côte avec moi,
Mais la Fatalité ne connaît point de trève.
Le ver est dans le fruit, le réveil dans le rêve
Et le remords est dans l'amour, telle est la loi!'

Verlaine became compromised with the Government for having helped his friends during the Commune, and was obliged to take refuge in England. From there he wandered to Belgium, and then, after a time, back to Paris. From this moment dates his friendship with Arthur Rimbaud, who, having twice tramped from Charleville in the Ardennes to Paris and been obliged to return, the third time set out to present himself to Verlaine. The undeniable talent of the young author of the *Bateau Ivre*, etc., had immediately appealed to Verlaine, his personality no less so; the two became great friends, and decided to travel together. They set off accordingly for Belgium, and it was in Brussels that took place the violent quarrel between Verlaine and Rimbaud which led to police intervention and the sentence of two years' imprisonment passed on Verlaine. It was during

his imprisonment that Verlaine composed his 'Romances sans Paroles,' perhaps the most perfect of his performances, that most nearly realises his ideal of poetry as he himself expressed it :—

'De la Musique avant toute chose,
Et pour cela préfère l'impair
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose.

Il faut aussi que tu n'ailles point
Choisir les mots sans quelque méprise :
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint . . .

Car nous voulons la Nuance encore,
Pas la couleur, rien que la Nuance !'

The famous

'Il pleure dans mon cœur
Comme il pleut sur la ville,' etc.,

or

'Dans l'interminable
Ennui de la plaine
La neige incertaine
Luit comme du sable.

Le ciel est de cuivre,
Sans lueur aucune ;
On croirait voir vivre
Et mourir la lune,' etc.,

or the 'Poor Young Shepherd' :—

'J'ai peur d'un baiser,
Comme d'une abeille.'

It was also during his imprisonment that Verlaine received the news of his wife's separation from him. On hearing this, to quote his own words,

'I know not what nor who raised me suddenly, drew me from my bed without giving me time to dress, and prostrated me in tears at the foot of the Crucifix.'

This then is the period of his sincere conversion, or reversion to Catholicism, which finds expression in his 'Sagesse.'

It was certainly in prison that Verlaine composed his finest work.

In 1875 Verlaine was released from prison and returned to France, but soon left for England, where he taught French and drawing till 1877. Then he again returned to France and obtained posts as professor in various colleges—at Rethel, at Boulogne-sur-Seine, at Neuilly. In 1884 he published his prose criticisms *Les Poètes Maudits* and another volume of verse *Jadis et Naguère.*

He was now famous, and things really looked brighter for him till, in 1886, with the death of his mother, came a return to the old Bohemian life, and though for the next ten years he continued writing, his circumstances became steadily darker, and he only left one hospital to enter another, till he died, practically abandoned, in 1896.

In his 'Dédicace' to Gabriel Vicaire, Verlaine pleads for himself:—

> 'Il faut n'être pas dupe en ce farceur de monde
> Où le bonheur n'a rien d'exquis et d'alléchant,
> S'il n'y frétille un peu de pervers et immonde;
> Et pour n'être pas dupe, il faut être méchant.'

And again:—

> 'Plaignez-moi, car je suis mauvais et non méchant.'

His life was a series of contradictory efforts on the one hand towards purity, on the other towards pleasure; a series of contrasts between his lofty ideals and his failure to attain them, a continual duel between the spirit and the flesh. And his writings are the record of these contrasts—offered us with a frankness and so strong a personal note as to compel the now well-worn comparison with Villon. And it is to the age of Villon that Verlaine would revert. In his 'Sagesse' he takes up the consideration of the ideal age:—

> 'Sagesse d'un Louis Racine, je t'envie!
> O n'avoir pas suivi les leçons de Rollin,
> N'être pas né dans le grand siècle à son déclin,
> Quand le soleil couchant si beau dorait la vie.

Quand Maintenon jetait sur la France ravie
L'ombre douce et la paix de ses coiffes de lin,
Et royale abritait la veuve et l'orphelin,
Quand l'étude de la prière était suivie ;—'

But on consideration he finds after all his ideal is not here but further away still.

'Non. Il fut gallican, ce siècle, et janséniste !
C'est vers le moyen âge, énorme et délicat,
Qu'il faudrait que mon cœur en partie naviguât,
Loin de nos jours d'esprit charnel et de chair triste.'

Or take 'Un Conte,' from the collection named *Amour* :—

UN CONTE

'Simplement, comme on verse un parfum sur une flamme,
Et comme un soldat répand son sang pour la patrie,
Je voudrais pouvoir mettre mon cœur avec mon âme
Dans un beau cantique à la Sainte Vierge Marie.

Mais je suis, hélas ! un pauvre pécheur trop indigne,
Ma voix hurlerait parmi le chœur des voix des justes :
Ivre encore du vin amer de la terrestre vigne,
Elle pourrait offenser des oreilles augustes.'

Or the 'Angélus de Midi,' from the same volume :—

'Je suis dur comme un juif et têtu comme lui,
Littéral, ne faisant le bien qu'avec ennui,
Quand je le fais et prêt à tout le mal possible.

Mon esprit s'ouvre et s'offre, on dirait une cible ;
Je ne puis plus compter les chutes de mon cœur ;
La charité se fane aux doigts de la langueur ;

L'ennui m'investit d'un fossé d'eau dormante ;
Un parti de mon être a peur et parlemente ;
Il me faut à tout prix un secours prompt et fort.

Ce fort secours, c'est vous, maîtresse de la mort
Et reine de la vie, ô Vierge immaculée. . . .'

The most complete expression of this temper is found in those beautiful lines from 'Sagesse' :—

'O mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour,
Et la blessure est encore vibrante,
O mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour.

Voici mon cœur qui n'a battu qu'en vain,
Pour palpiter aux ronces du Calvaire,
Voici mon cœur qui n'a battu qu'en vain.

Voici mes yeux, luminaires d'erreur
Pour être éteints aux pleurs de la prière
Voici mes yeux, luminaires d'erreur.

Dieu de terreur et Dieu de Sainteté,
Hélas ! ce noir abîme de mon crime,
Dieu de terreur et Dieu de Sainteté.

Vous, Dieu de paix, de joie et de bonheur,
Toutes mes peurs, toutes mes ignorances,
Vous, Dieu de paix, de joie et de bonheur.

Vous connaissez tout cela, tout cela,
Et que je suis plus pauvre que personne.
Vous connaissez tout cela, tout cela,
Mais ce que j'ai, mon Dieu, je vous le donne.'

And this is the reward :—

'Et pour récompenser ton zèle en ces devoirs
Si doux qu'ils sont encore d'ineffables délices,
Je te ferai goûter sur terre mes prémices,
La paix du cœur, l'amour d'être pauvre, et mes soirs

Mystiques, quand l'esprit s'ouvre aux calmes espoirs
Et croit boire suivant ma promesse, au Calice
Eternel, et qu'au ciel pieux la lune glisse,
Et que sonnent les angélus roses et noirs,

En attendant l'assomption dans ma lumière,
L'éveil sans fin dans ma charité coutumière,
La musique de mes louanges à jamais,

Et l'extase perpétuelle et la science,
Et d'être en moi parmi l'aimable irradiance
De tes souffrances, enfin miennes, que j'aimais ! . . .
. . . . . .
J'ai l'extase et j'ai la terreur d'être choisi ;
Je suis indigne, mais je sais votre clémence.
Ah ! quel effort, mais quelle ardeur ! Et me voici,

Plein d'une humble prière, encor qu'un trouble immense
Brouille l'espoir que votre voix me révéla,
Et j'aspire en tremblant.—Pauvre âme, c'est cela !'

In the very contemplation of his ideal Verlaine does not forget his own weakness,[1] as he says in his 'Paraboles':—

'Soyez béni, Seigneur, qui m'avez fait chrétien
Dans ces temps de féroce ignorance et de haine,
Mais donnez-moi la force et l'audace sereine
De vous être à toujours fidèle comme un chien.'

And in this same humour he finds consolation in the idea of the sublimity of suffering:—

'N'as tu pas l'espérance
De la fidélité,
Et pour plus d'assurance
Dans la sécurité
N'as tu pas la souffrance?'—*Sagesse XXII.*

Or this:—

'L'âme antique était rude et vaine,
Et ne voyait, dans la douleur,
Que l'acuité de la peine,
Ou l'étonnement du malheur.

L'art, sa figure la plus claire,
Traduit ce double sentiment
Par deux grands types de la Mère
En proie au suprême tourment. . . .

La douleur chrétienne est immense,
Elle, comme le cœur humain.
Elle souffre, puis elle pense,
Et calme poursuit son chemin. . . .

Elle participe au supplice
Qui sauve toute nation,
Attendrissant le sacrifice
Par sa vaste compassion.'

Suffering then is the great healer, only with it hope must go hand in hand:—

'Surtout il faut garder toute espérance.'

It is the Nietzschean cry: 'By my faith and love I conjure you maintain holy your highest hope.'

[1] *Amour*, 1888.

This is the ideal mood. Then there is the reverse of the medal; he is led into trouble by his 'old accomplice,' his own weakness:—

'J'ai la fureur d'aimer. Mon cœur si faible est fou
N'importe quand, n'importe quel, et n'importe où,
Qu'un éclair de beauté, de vertu, de vaillance
Luise, il s'y précipite, il y vole, il s'y lance.'

The conclusion of this is practically an acknowledgment of defeat:—

'J'ai la fureur d'aimer. Qu'y faire? Ah! laisser faire.'

Or take this from *Birds in the Night*:—

ROMANCES SANS PAROLES

'Par instants je suis le pauvre navire
Qui court, démâté, parmi la tempête,
Et ne voyant pas Notre Dame luire
Pour l'engouffrement en priant s'apprête.

Par instants je meurs la mort du pécheur
Qui se sait damné s'il n'est confessé,
Et perdant l'espoir de nul confesseur
Se tord dans l'Enfer qu'il a devancé.

O mais! par instants, j'ai l'extase rouge
Du premier chrétien sous la dent rapace,
Qui rit à Jesus témoin, sans que bouge
Un poil de sa chair, un nerf de sa face!'

And since he is sincere, it is this weakness, this continual falling short of the ideal that causes his suffering.

'Mon cœur est un troupeau dissipé par l'autan,
Mais qui se réunit quand le vrai Berger siffle,
Et que le bon vieux chien, Sergent ou Remords, gifle
D'une dent suffisante et dure assez l'engeance. . .'
Liturgies intimes: Final.

'Car vraiment j'ai souffert beaucoup,
Débusqué, traqué comme un loup,
Qui n'en peut plus, d'errer en chasse
Du bon repos, du sûr abri,
Et qui fait des bonds de cabri
Sous les coups de toute une race.'
Amour: Lucien Letinois II.

And he falls into despair :—

'Je ne peux plus compter les chutes de mon cœur.'

And again :—

'Je suis l'empire à la fin de la décadence
Qui regarde passer les grands barbares blancs.
Ah ! tout est bu, tout est noyé, plus rien à dire.'

And finally he describes himself as

'Lasse de vivre, ayant peur de mourir, pareille
Au brick perdu, jouet du flux et du reflux,
Mon âme pour d'affreux naufrages appareillé.'

Verlaine would thus appear to have no illusions about himself—that is a saddening factor.

In these two opposing moods, Verlaine saw no contradiction. He treats the subject in his criticism of himself, noting the two divisions :—

'On the one hand verse or prose in which Catholicism spreads out its logic, its blandishments and its terrors, and those "horrors" of which Bossuet speaks; on the other hand purely worldly productions, which are sensual, with a hint of evil irony and a more than skin-deep "Sadism." It will be asked: "What becomes of unity of thought in all this?" But it is there! It is there in the Catholic standpoint,—in the human standpoint, which for us is the same thing. I believe, and I sin in thought as in action; I believe, and I repent in thought. Or else I believe, and the next minute I am a bad Christian. The recollection of, hope for, invocation of a sin, interest me with or without remorse, sometimes under the very form of sin, and most frequently fortified with all the consequences of sin, so strong, natural, animal are flesh and blood. It pleases you and me and the writer to put down on paper this interest, and to publish it more or less well expressed; we consign it to literary form, either forgetting all religious ideas, or not losing sight of a single one of them. Should we be condemned as a poet? A hundred times, No!

'Whether the Catholic conscience reason in this way or no, has nothing to do with us. Now, do the Catholic poems of Pauvre Lélian, from the literary point of view, cover the other poems, and

vice versâ, and do the two groups form one homogeneous group? A hundred times, Yes. The tone is the same in both—so is the style, the manner, the attitude. Now solemn and simple, now elaborate, languid, nervous, gay—everything, but the same tone throughout, just as man, mystic and sensualist, remains intellectually man in all the varied manifestations of one thought which has its ups and downs. And our author was free to write volumes which are solely of prayer at the same time as volumes which are solely impressions, just as the contrary would be allowable.'

This conception of life as a continual duel between the Ideal and the Real is essentially Baudelairian.

This is what Charles Morice means when he says that Verlaine presupposes Baudelaire.

There are indeed from the *Poèmes Saturniens* onwards distinct traces of the influence that clandestine reading of the *Fleurs du Mal* produced on the mind of Verlaine. Take, for instance, from the *Poèmes Saturniens* the 'Effet de Nuit' (as Villonesque as it is Baudelairian), or the 'Rossignol,' which compels comparison with Baudelaire's 'Correspondances.'

EFFET DE NUIT

'La nuit. La pluie. Un ciel blafard qui déchiquette
De flèches et de tours à jour la silhouette
D'une vieille ville gothique éteinte au lointain gris.
La plaine. Un gibet plein de pendus rabougris
Secoués par le bec avide des corneilles,
Et dansant dans l'air noir des gigues non pareilles,
Tandis que leurs pieds sont la pâture des loups.
Quelques buissons d'épine épars, et quelques houx
Dressant l'horreur de leur feuillage à droite, à gauche,
Sur le fuligineux fouillis d'un fond d'ébauche,
Et puis, autour de trois livides prisonniers
Qui vont pieds nus, un gros de hauts pertuisaniers
En marche, et leurs fers droits, comme des fers de herse,
Luisent à contresens des lances de l'averse.'

LE ROSSIGNOL

'Comme un vol criard d'oiseaux en émoi,
Tous mes souvenirs s'abattent sur moi,

S'abattent parmi le feuillage jaune
De mon cœur mirant son tronc plié d'aune
Au tain violet de l'eau des Regrets
Qui mélancoliquement coule auprès,
S'abattent, et puis la rumeur mauvaise
Qu'une brise moite en montant apaise,
S'éteint par degrés dans l'arbre, si bien
Qu'au bout d'un instant on n'entend plus rien.
Plus rien que la voix célébrant l'Absente,
Plus rien que la voix—ô si languissante !—
De l'oiseau qui fut mon Premier Amour,
Et qui chante encor comme au premier jour ;
Et dans sa splendeur triste d'une lune
Se levant blafarde et solennelle, une
Nuit mélancolique et lourde d'été,
Pleine de silence et d'obscurité,
Berce sur l'azur qu'un vent doux effleure
L'arbre qui frissonne et l'oiseau qui pleure.'

Here is a Baudelairian passage[1] from 'Sagesse' :—

'Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois
D'une douleur on veut croire orpheline,
Qui vient mourir au bas de la colline
Parmi la bise errant en courts abois.

L'âme du loup pleure dans cette voix
Qui monte avec le soleil qui décline,
D'une agonie on veut croire câline
Et qui ravit et qui navre à la fois.

Pour faire mieux cette plainte assoupie,
La neige tombe à longs traits de charpie
A travers le couchant sanguin.

Et l'air a l'air d'être un soupir d'automne,
Tant il fait doux par ce soir monotone
Où se dorlote un paysage lent.'

And this passage,

'Bon chevalier masqué qui chevauche en silence
Le malheur a percé mon vieux cœur de sa lance.

Le sang de mon vieux cœur n'a fait qu'un jet vermeil,
Puis s'est évaporé sur les fleurs au soleil.

[1] Cp. Baudelaire, 'Correspondances.'

L'ombre éteignit mes yeux, un cri vint à ma bouche
Et mon cœur est mort dans un frisson farouche.

Alors le Malheur s'est rapproché,
Il a mis pied à terre et sa main m'a touché.

Son doigt ganté de fer entra dans ma blessure,
Tandis qu'il attestait sa loi d'une voix dure,'

which in its Baudelairism recalls the manner of Petrus Borel's Introduction to *Madame Putiphar.*

And the opening of the volume,

'Lecteur paisible et bucolique
Sobre, naïf homme de bien,
Jette ce livre saturnien,
Orgiaque et mélancolique'

seems borrowed from the *épigraphe pour un livre condamné.*

The Baudelairian doctrine of 'Correspondances' is a strong note in the 'Romances sans Paroles.' And again this from the *Jadis et Naguère* :—

'Chair. O seul fruit mordu des vergers d'ici-bas
Fruit amer et sucré qui jutes aux dents seules
Des affamés du seul amour, bouches ou gueules,
Et bon dessert des forts, et leur joyeux repas.

Amour ! le seul émoi de ceux que n'émeut pas
L'horreur de vivre, amour qui presse sous tes meules
Les scrupules des libertins et des bégueules
Pour le pain des damnés qu'élisent les sabbats.

Amour, tu m'apparais aussi comme un beau pâtre
Dont rêve la fileuse assise auprès de l'âtre
Les soirs d'hiver dans la chaleur d'un sarment clair.

Et la fileuse c'est la Chair, et l'heure tinte
Où le rêve étendra la rêveuse—heure sainte
Ou non ! qu'importe à votre extase, Amour et Chair ?'

But to consider the resemblances—Verlaine himself describes the most important in the Preface to his *Liturgies Intimes : A Charles Baudelaire.*

'Je ne t'ai pas connu, je ne t'ai pas aimé,
Je ne te connais point et je t'aime encor moins,
Je me chargerais mal de ton nom diffamé
Et si j'ai quelque droit d'être entre tes témoins,

C'est que d'abord et c'est que d'ailleurs vers les Pieds joints
D'abord par les clous froids puis par l'élan pâmé
Des femmes de péché desquelles, ô tant oints
Tant baisés, chrême fol et baiser affamé !—

Tu tombas, tu prias comme moi, comme toutes
Les âmes que la faim et la soif sur tes routes
Poussaient belles d'espoir au Calvaire touché !'

The influence of Baudelaire is apparent again in that artifice which Verlaine copied from the elder poet, and which so many have in their turn copied—that of comparing his soul, his mind, which is entirely abstract, with a landscape—that is, with something concrete. Thus he writes in the *Fêtes Galantes*:

'Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques. . . .'
Clair de Lune.

In the same way Samain will say :—

'Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade.'

It is here that we see the birth of the Symbolist school. In the same way Moréas will make these Baudelairian comparisons :—

'Mon cœur est un cercueil vide dans une tombe
Mon âme est un manoir hanté par les corbeaux.'
Les Syrtes.

All that the symbolists have to do is to suppress the abstract word—the first term of the comparison.

Verlaine has none of Baudelaire's pose ; he laid down his canons of art—

'L'art tout d'abord doit être et paraître sincère
L'art, mes enfants, c'est d'être absolument soi-même,'

—canons which are decisively un-Baudelairian and which

Verlaine most certainly fulfilled. He is always simple, always sincere and quite without any desire to mystify us.

Where Baudelaire becomes bitter, Verlaine is only sad, and he has none of Baudelaire's love of wrongdoing *quā* wrongdoing. As Charles Morice well remarked, Baudelaire loved the *femmes damnées* merely in so far as they are such; he carried Sadism to the point of *requiring* a hint of baseness to compose attraction, whereas Verlaine sought even in wickedness to discover something tender and beautiful for consolation.

'Even for the terror of religion he invents a tenderness, without robbing it of any of its force and sublimity; he lends graciousness to Grace, and all life would be a lasting festival for him, could he but celebrate the final reconciliation of the seven deadly sins and the three theological Virtues.'[1]

This refers to the *Crimen Amoris*, that long poem in which Verlaine would present Hell seeking to sacrifice itself for Universal Love—together with the poet's hope that his desires may be annihilated since they wreck all his efforts towards the Ideal. But 'the sacrifice was not accepted.'

Here Verlaine goes further than Baudelaire, though he is, as a rule, far more simple than Baudelaire.

Verlaine is one of those curious cases who, set them as often as you will on the path, seem infallibly to drift toward the gutter. The pity of it is that a great poet *was* there; it is proved when Verlaine was imprisoned.

His collected works form four large volumes. He fell into the danger which besets your purely personal poet,[2] and recorded many of his experiences that were better unrecorded; but when all is said, and these are winnowed, there remains in those volumes some of the greatest poetry ever written.

[1] Charles Morice: *Paul Verlaine*, 1888.

[2] He himself said of his *Bonheur*, and the saying holds good for his whole work: 'There is no page of this book which has not been lived.'

IV

TRISTAN CORBIÈRE

Édouard Joachim Corbière, who later preferred to be known by the more romantic name of Tristan Corbière, was a Breton, born at Morlaix in 1845.

At the age of sixteen he already showed signs of consumption, and also of a peculiarly blasé temperament. It was in consideration of these two facts that his father encouraged his love of the sea by building him a sloop. And, indeed, on the sea, Corbière could always discover the ecstasy of life—the sea was his great, his only passion.

In 1873 he came to Paris, where he wrote for *La Vie Parisienne*, and indulged his taste for draughtsmanship. We know very little of his life in Paris ; there are practically no documents to help us. His object seems to have been to lead a 'Baudelairian' life ; his actions appear as one continual struggle after originality. He was another *des Esseintes*—sleeping all day and breakfasting at midnight,—and in spite of all his efforts remaining incurably bored, and as a true Baudelairian wearing his rue of boredom with a difference.

'Dans mes dégoûts surtout j'ai des goûts élégants,'

he says in his *Poète contumace*.

His Bohemian existence certainly hastened his end ; he in no way deceived himself in this matter, but withdrew to his native Morlaix, where he died in March 1875.

Corbière must be placed among those minds it is impos-

sible to class. Indefinable, elusive, his poems are just the fluttering drapery of ideas which more often than not baffle our efforts to grasp the body of intention underneath. He carries the Baudelairian ideal of suggestion to its highest pitch.

> 'Faisant d'un à peu près d'artiste,
> Un philosophe d'à peu près,
> Râleur de soleil ou de frais,
> En dehors de l'humaine piste.'

Jules Laforgue said of Corbière that he had no theories, no æsthetic. But there is a hint of spite in Laforgue's severity, and we can suspect the reason of it. Leo Treznik, a friend of Corbière, had suggested in the *Lutèce* that Laforgue was merely a disciple of Corbière. Laforgue at once replied (in the *Lutèce* of the 4th October 1885) that he had left his 'Complaints' with the publisher Vanier six months before the publication of Verlaine's *Poètes Maudits*.

Corbière's *Les amours jaunes* had been published in Paris in a limited edition of 481 copies by Glady in 1873, but at first did not sell, and lay about in the bookshops till Verlaine discovered them and placed Corbière among his *Poètes Maudits* (1884).

Thus it would appear to be through Verlaine that Laforgue learnt of the existence of Tristan Corbière. Laforgue seems to have always borne Corbière some malice on account of being considered his disciple, and, in his article on this poet, he really gives too free a rein to his feelings, declaring that there is

> 'no poetry, no verse, hardly literature—a craft without any plastic interest—the interest lies in the lashing, the dry point, the punning, the frisking, the romantic scamping.'

Doubtless poets are not in the habit of sparing one another, but this ill-nature towards a poet, like himself, consumptive, suggests that Laforgue felt that Treznik's

article had hit its mark. Indeed, Laforgue's *blague*, that irony turned against himself, strongly resembles Corbière's attitude. (Let us remember, too, that Corbière died of consumption at the age of thirty, and Laforgue of the same disease at the age of twenty-seven.)

Corbière has all the Baudelairian habit of seizing upon the disquieting aspect of things—a temper which we shall meet again in Rollinat.

Take, for instance, this poem :—

LE CRAPAUD

'Un chant dans une nuit sans air. . . .
La lune plaque en métal clair
Les découpures du vert sombre.

. . . Un chant ; comme un écho, tout vif
Enterré, là, sous le massif. . . .
—Ça se tait : Viens, c'est là dans l'ombre. . . .

—Un crapaud !—Pourquoi cette peur,
Près de moi, ton soldat fidèle !
Vois-le, poète tondu, sans aile
Rossignol de la boue. . . . Horreur !—

Il chante. Horreur !—Horreur, pourquoi ?
Vois-tu pas son œil de lumière. . . .
Non : il s'en va, froid, sous sa pierre.
. . . . . .
Bonsoir—ce crapaud-là c'est moi.'

We quote from the epitaph he composed for himself :—

'Coureur d'idéal—sans idée,
Rime riche,—et jamais rimée,
Sans avoir été,—revenu,
Se retrouvant partout perdu.

Poète en dépit de ses vers,
Artiste sans art,—à l'envers,
Philosophe,—à tort à travers.
Un drôle sérieux—pas drôle,
Acteur, il ne sut pas son rôle ;
Peintre : il jouait de la musette ;
Et musicien : de la palette. .

Ne fut quelqu'un, ni quelque chose :
Son naturel était la pose. . . .

Trop Soi pour se pouvoir souffrir,
L'esprit à sec et la tête ivre,
Fini, mais ne sachant finir,
Il mourut en s'attendant vivre
Et vécut, s'attendant mourir.'

Like Baudelaire in the *Fanfarlo*, he likes to pose as *L'homme des belles œuvres ratées*. The same temper breathes in these lines from 'Découragеux' :—

'Ce fut un vrai poète : il n'avait pas de chant.
Mort, il aimait le jour et dédaigna de geindre.
Peintre : il aimait son art—Il oublia de peindre. . . .
Il voyait trop. Et voir est un aveuglement. . . .
. . . . . .
—Pur héros de roman : il adorait la brune,
Sans voir s'elle était blonde. . . . Il adorait la lune ;
Mais il n'aima jamais. Il n'avait pas le temps.

—Chercheur infatigable : Ici bas où l'on rame,
Il regardait ramer, du haut de sa grande âme,
Fatigué de pitié pour ceux qui ramaient bien. . . .'

And again here :—

'L'idéal à moi : c'est un songe
Creux ; mon horizon—l'imprévu—
Et le mal du pays me ronge. . . .
Du pays que je n'ai pas vu.

Je suis le fou de Pampelune
J'ai peur du rire de la Lune,
Cafarde avec son crêpe noir. . . .
Horreur ! tout est donc sous un éteignoir.

J'entends comme un bruit de crécelle. . . .
C'est la mâle heure qui m'appelle.
Dans le creux des nuits tombe : un glas . . . deux glas.
J'ai compté plus de quatorze heures—
L'heure est une larme—Tu pleures,
Mon cœur ! . . . Chante encor, va—ne compte pas.'

Tristan Corbière is the type of the writer who makes mock of his own feelings—the better to torture himself.

To show that the poet is no one's dupe—least of all his own—that is the aim of such poets as Corbière, Laforgue, and Charles Cros.

The poems of this last bohemian and whimsical poet, collected in *Le Coffret de Santal* and *Le Collier de Perles*, also show the influence of Baudelaire—with all their love of the artificial, of the oriental, and of opium.

These charming lines from the *Coffret de Santal* are absolutely Baudelairian :—

'Elle avait de beaux cheveux blonds
Comme une moisson d'août, si longs
Qu'il lui tombaient jusqu'aux talons.
Elle avait une voix étrange,
Musicale, de fée ou d'ange,
Des yeux verts sur leur noire frange.'

V

HUYSMANS

HUYSMANS with his bitterness, his restlessness, his sustained repugnance for his own thought, his general disgust of everything, is a direct descendant of Baudelaire.

'Amabam amare' quotes Sainte-Beuve for his own case, —for Huysmans, it is the only occupation. That is why Huysmans the critic is so much more interesting than Huysmans the pure novelist.[1] The critic becomes absorbed from time to time in the masterpieces he observes, and a sincere note of enthusiasm will creep in; but the novelist has only one attitude—profoundest ennui. Therein lies the weakness—the work is all negative. There is only *dégoût de la vie*; we miss the pendant *extase de la vie* which we naturally demand.

Mr. Symons has made a portrait of Huysmans which is just that which we should make for ourselves, having only his early works to go upon :—

'Perhaps it is only a stupid book that some one has mentioned, or a stupid woman; as he speaks the book looms up before one, becomes monstrous in its dulness, a masterpiece and miracle of imbecility; the unimportant little woman grows into a slow horror before your eyes. It is always the unpleasant aspect of things that he seizes, but the intensity of his revolt from the unpleasantness brings a touch of the sublime into the very intensity of his disgust. Every sentence is an epigram, and every epigram slaughters a

[1] In contradistinction to the psychological interest which develops with the later work.

reputation or an idea. He speaks with an accent as of pained surprise, an amused look of contempt so profound that it becomes almost pity for human imbecility.'

This obsession by the 'unpleasant side of things' finds its expression in the furious disgust of Huysmans' early works: *En Ménage*, *Les Sœurs Vatard*, *A Vau l'Eau*.

In Nature only the melancholy side can appeal to him.

He has also all the Baudelairian love of contemplative sadness. Here is how he speaks of Nature:—

'Nature is only interesting when weakly and distressful. I do not deny her magic and her glory when her great laugh bursts her corsage of dark rocks, and she brandishes in the sun her green-tipped bosom, but I confess I do not feel before her displays of vigour that tender charm which is produced in me by a desolate spot in a great town, a bare mound, a little stream weeping between two frail trees.

'In reality the beauty of a landscape is made up of melancholy.'

La Bièvre.

Or this from the *Cabaret des Peupliers*:—

'In the distance one or two shaky huts with mattresses hanging out of the windows, and flowers planted in milk cans and old saucepans; trees whose sap is weakly are placed at irregular intervals, and, showing their paralysed arms like beggars, they shake their heads that stammer in the wind, and bend their trunks poorly nourished by the niggardliness of an incurable soil.'

Let us now pass on to consider *A Rebours* and its hero des Esseintes, who, as is usual in this author's works, is Huysmans himself.

On the title-page we read: 'I must find delight beyond my time—though the world have horror of my joy, and in its coarseness know not what I mean.'

Let us see how he sets about accomplishing his aim. In the first place, by carrying the Baudelairian attitude of detachment from the world to the point of withdrawing to a 'comfortable solitude far from the incessant deluge of human stupidity.'

The site chosen, he sets to work to arrange his ideal home. The descriptions here are clearly reminiscent of Gautier. In this home, then, des Esseintes will live his own life; his aim is to forget reality and live in a dream—'to delude himself to the point of substituting the dream for the reality.' But a change has now come over the spirit of the dream—the ideal element has left it, it is merely the dream of the sensations. The one essential thing in Huysmans' tactics concerning the pursuit of sensation being always to follow an exceptional course, des Esseintes resolves to satisfy this condition by beginning his day in the evening and supping at five o'clock A.M. (*l'exception dans l'ordre moral* again). And then proceeds with the cult of the sensations.

He takes up the Baudelairian theory of correspondences:—

'He thought that the sense of smell could experience pleasures as great as those of hearing and sight, each sense, by reason of a natural disposition and an erudite cultivation, being able to perceive new impressions, to multiply them tenfold, to co-ordinate them, and make of them that whole which constitutes a performance'

—which theme is developed at length in the tenth chapter. Baudelaire showed the way here. Huysmans carries the theory of correspondences even further, as when he speaks of liqueurs:—

'Des Esseintes drank a drop here and a drop there (and) managed to produce in his throat sensations analogous to those which music procures for the ear. . . . Moreover, for him each liqueur corresponded in taste with the sound of an instrument. For instance, dry curaçao, with the clarionet whose note is high and velvety; kümmel, with the hautboy whose sonorous timbre has a nasal quality; menthe and anis, with the flute which is both sugary and peppery, whining and sweet; while, to complete the orchestra, kirsch sounds furious trumpet-notes, etc., etc.

'These principles once granted, he was able, thanks to profound

experience, to play silent melodies upon his tongue, mute funeral marches with magnificent spectacle, to hear in his mouth soli of menthe, duos of vespetro and rum.'

In his reading, too, des Esseintes shows his Baudelairian tastes. Poe has a great attraction for him and for this reason :—

'He was the first—under the title of the *Imp of the Perverse*—to study those irresistible impulses which the will suffers without realising them, and of which cerebral pathology has now given an almost certain explanation. He was also the first to, if not point out, at least divulge the depressing influence of fear acting upon the will in the same way as anæsthetics which paralyse feeling, and curare which destroys the nervous motive elements. It was towards this point, this lethargy of the will, that he had made his studies converge, analysing the effects of this moral poison, indicating the symptoms of its progress, the troubles beginning with anxiety, continuing with agony, and finally breaking out into terror which stupefies volition, while the intelligence, though shaken, does not give way.'

Of the moderns, he was influenced, he says, by Zola, the Goncourts, Flaubert, and above all by Baudelaire. For the last-named, des Esseintes had a boundless admiration :—

'According to him literature had been limited hitherto to an exploration of the surface of the soul, or to a penetration into such of its subterranean chambers as are accessible and lit up, while the authors noted here and there the beds of capital sins, studying their veins, their growth, and remarked, like Balzac, for example, the simplification of the soul possessed by the monomania of a passion.

'Baudelaire went further, he travelled down to the bottom of the inexhaustible mine, and made his way through abandoned or unknown galleries, and finally reached those districts of the soul wherein is the ramification of thought's monstrous vegetation.

'He revealed the morbid psychology of the mind which has reached the October of its sensations; related the symptoms of souls sought out by sorrow, favoured by "Spleen"; showed the decay of impressions, increasing as the enthusiasms and beliefs of youth

are dulled, when nothing remains but the arid recollection of misery suffered, intolerance undergone, irritation incurred by intelligences oppressed by an absurd destiny.

'He had undergone all the phases of this lamentable autumn, watching the human creature embittering itself with such docility, cleverly deceiving itself, forcing its thoughts to cheat one another the better to suffer, in advance spoiling all possible joy, thanks to analysis and observation.

'At a moment when literature attributed the pain of life almost exclusively to the misfortunes of love unrequited or adulterous jealousy, he neglected these childish maladies to probe wounds more incurable, more sensitive, and deeper; wounds which satiety, disillusion, contempt, inflict upon those ruined souls whom the present tortures, the past revolts, and the future terrifies and plunges into despair.'

We have quoted at some length—a comprehensive criticism is frequently an illumination on the mind of the critic quite as much as that of the criticised.

In des Esseintes Huysmans created a type which has had, and still has, a great influence: the type of the naturally unnatural. Baudelaire, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Villiers de l'Isle Adam had seen the danger of the art-for-art theory. Not so the descendants of des Esseintes; with them it is become the keystone of their building—*Fuyons—rentrons dans l'artificiel* is their motto.

A Rebours marks the beginning of the second stage of Huysmans' development—shows the first signs of the writer's being *en route* towards faith. True, there had been a hint of this in *A Vau l'Eau*, where Folantin definitely decides that 'religion alone could heal his aching wound,' when he thinks of a cousin who is a nun, and begins to envy her her calm, silent life, and to regret his own lost faith, and exclaims,

'What a consolation is to be found in prayer, what a pastime in confession, what an outlet in the rites of cult, "Spleen" has no hold on pious souls!'

The idea recurs in *A Rebours*. Des Esseintes

'. . . looked down as it were from the tower of his mind upon the panorama of the Church, its hereditary influence upon humanity for centuries; he pictured it to himself desolate yet great, announcing to man the horror of life, the inclemency of fate, preaching patience, contrition, the spirit of sacrifice, seeking to heal all sores by showing the bleeding wounds of Christ, giving assurance of divine privileges, promising the fairer part of Paradise to the afflicted, exhorting the human creature to suffer, to offer to God as holocaust its vicissitudes and its troubles. The Church became truly eloquent, maternal to the unhappy, compassionate to the oppressed, threatening to oppressors and despots.'

And the conclusion of the book is a prayer :—

'Lord, have pity on the Christian who doubts, on the unbeliever who would fain believe, on the galley slave of life who embarks alone in the night under a firmament no longer lit up by the consoling watch-lights of former hopes.'

The next step in this path is to be found in Huysmans' interest in sacrilege and satanism as expressed in *Là-bas*.

But here already, as M. Lemaître points out, Huysmans was *en route* towards belief :—

'For when one believes in God sufficiently to curse Him, it is very simple: one might as well adore Him. Black masses come near the other mass because they are its contrary: and satanic despair may engender divine hope. Absolute pessimism, when less a perversion of the mind than a state of the nervous system, may be a great creator of dreams.'

On this subject one may well apply to Huysmans his own words on Barbey d'Aurevilly :—

'Sacrilege which proceeds from the very existence of a religion can only be intentionally and pertinently carried out by a believer, for man would find no delight in profaning a faith that was indifferent or unknown to him.'

Finally, *En Route* completes the history of the mind's development in giving the story of his conversion—one

of the two natural courses open to one who suffered so acutely from his disgust at life.

'Ah!' he went on, 'when I think of that horror, that disgust of existence which has for years and years increased in me, I understand how I am forced to make for the Church, the only port where I can find shelter.

'Once I despised her, because I had a staff on which to lean when the great winds of weariness blew; I believed in my novels, I worked at my history, I had my art. I have come to recognise its absolute inadequacy, its complete incapacity to afford happiness. Then I understood that Pessimism was, at most, good to console those who had no real need of comfort; I understood that its theories, alluring when we are young, and rich, and well, become singularly weak and lamentably false when age advances, when infirmities declare themselves, when all around is crumbling.

'I went to the Church, that hospital for souls. There at least they take you in, they put you to bed and nurse you, they do not merely turn their backs on you as in the wards of Pessimism and tell you the name of your disease.'—*En Route*, trans. Kegan Paul. Third edition, 1897.

There are then in Huysmans two conflicting feelings which appear contradictory, but are so *only* in appearance —that of the horror of life, and above all of the impurity of the flesh; and that of a certain delectation in this very ugliness. He hates the impurity, and yet takes pleasure in describing it. We have already seen that such a state of mind is common, but it presupposes a Christian state of mind in the being who experiences the feeling. The judgment that Huysmans, in the bottom of his heart, always made on his own works, the profound aversion with which they inspired him, recalls the disgust that any believer has for himself when he has succumbed to temptation. Huysmans' soul was purified by each of his intellectual crises, though slowly, very slowly, and in this way naturalism in him was transformed into mysticism.

This point brings us to *A Rebours*, which was such a

literary event at the time of its publication. Here we see him attracted by the stupidity and ugliness of things, attracted by them, that is, not in life, but in the picture he draws of them.

Such, shortly, is the history of the stages of Huysmans' 'conversion.' For a long while no one was willing to believe that a writer who was at once so naturalistic and so ironical could be sincere. Men of letters saw in *En Route* nothing but a passion for human documentation. They reasoned that Huysmans, a disciple, a friend of Zola, had gone to the monastery to seek new artistic sensations. On the other hand, theologians did not understand a man's embracing a religion without entering into theological controversy, and they reproached Huysmans with being led into Catholicism through the senses. Such a conversion held nothing flattering to their pride as scholastic doctors who would lead men to faith by way of reason. Then again, the Catholicism of Huysmans frightened them. This man, who from one day to the next went to the utmost limits of Catholicism; this man, who was only interested in mysticism, and who, only just converted, already suggested the martyr, presented a spectacle by which the timorous were scandalised.

Yet Huysmans was really and sincerely converted.

Twenty years after the publication of *A Rebours* he had the volume privately reprinted, and wrote for it a Preface which is of the highest importance for whomsoever would understand this man who was above and before all sincere:—

'I was not brought up in a congregational school, but in a lycée; I was never pious in my youth, and that aspect of childish recollection, first communion and education, which often occupies an important place in conversions, had none in mine. And what complicates the difficulty still further is that when I wrote *A Rebours* I was not in the habit of setting foot inside a church; I was not acquainted with any church-going Catholic, nor with any priest; I felt no divine touch urging me to direct my steps towards

the Church; I was living quite comfortably in my trough; it seemed perfectly natural to me to satisfy every impulse of my senses, and the thought that this kind of tournament was forbidden never entered my head.

'*A Rebours* appeared in 1884, and I went into a Trappist monastery to become converted in 1892. Nearly eight years passed before the seed of this book began to grow: let us say there were three years of secret, steady, and sometimes perceptible work of grace; there still remain five years when I do not remember feeling any Catholic desire, any regret for the life I was leading, any wish to change it. Why, how, was I incited into a way which was then to me lost in the night? I am absolutely incapable of saying. Nothing, unless it were the influence of béguine convents or cloisters, the prayers of a very devout Dutch family whom I scarcely knew, can explain the perfect unconsciousness of the last cry; the religious appeal on the last page of *A Rebours*.

'Yes, I know, there are some very strong-minded people who map out and arrange in advance the journey of their existence, and keep to their plan; it is even agreed, if I am not mistaken, that given the will one may accomplish anything, but I, I confess, have never been a man tenacious of purpose, nor a cunning author.

'My life and my writings have something passive about them, something unconsciously tending in a very certain direction outside myself. Providence was compassionate to me, Our Lady was kind to me. I confined myself to not opposing them when they showed their intentions; I simply obeyed; I was led along what are called the extraordinary ways; if any one is certain of the nonentity he would be without God's help, it is I.'

Such is the document Huysmans gives us of his conversion. There is no need to discuss it. What we now know of Huysmans proves how true it was, and how mistaken were those who predicted his return to his former ways.

It should have been seen that in Huysmans' religion there was nothing of that purely literary quality of Chateaubriand, nor of the purely moral and social character of that of Brunetière (to speak of a man recently dead, and who had a considerable influence).

A comparison of Brunetière and Huysmans forces itself upon us. While Brunetière sought for ten years to find 'reason for belief,' Huysmans entered the domain of faith straightway with no beating about the bush. For, after all, the best reason for belief is faith.

What happens to-day is rather curious. M. Brunetière's talent has been lauded to the skies, and far be it from us to criticise; from the moral point of view this man was a true saint.

On the other hand, much ridicule has been hurled at Huysmans because he was an artist who let himself be guided by his sensations.

But what is the result to-day? M. Brunetière, despite all his talent and his oratorical campaigns, only converts the converted. Not that he is at fault. Yet in addressing himself to philosophic reasoning he was addressing himself to that part of our mind which always wishes to reason, to the argumentative side. But reason destroys reason; the way to faith is not by the road of metaphysics.

Huysmans, on the contrary, far more humble, had the *feeling* of the divine. His book *En Route* tells us how this feeling was reinforced, renewed, by frequenting churches, by the company of two or three friends, and by the intellectual struggles he underwent. No psychologist —be he believer or sceptic—can afford to neglect such a book. One realises in reading these pages that faith—in so far as it can be analysed—is above and before all a feeling, and such an imperious feeling that it becomes will. The distinction between will and feeling is purely imaginary—in the act of faith feeling and will become one.

But then is added another element which Huysmans makes us understand perfectly, that element that for centuries has been known as 'Grace.' This word which has embittered so many theological quarrels expresses a

reality ; it means the support that the religious soul feels coming from outside.

From this point of view Huysmans' book *En Route* is a psychological document of the highest importance, and when the quarrels of certain theologians have long lain forgotten we shall take up his book to watch the efforts and the sufferings of a human soul.

To answer those questions of whence our coming and whither our going, what our progress, what our destiny and what the foundation of our morality, philosophers enough come with their contradictory replies. They ensure our taking pleasure in reading an artist, for Huysmans was a true artist, who did not trouble himself about the truth or name of one doctrine, but who reverently (yes, reverently, for aught one may say to the contrary) accepted all the Catholic faith, ordered his life in accordance with that doctrine, and died a saint's death after terrible suffering. As M. Henri d'Hennezel says :—

'His death was the most perfect of his works . . . no complaint ever came from his lips, and during all those months of agony when he felt life slipping away from him, in the midst of unspeakable suffering, he spoke of his illness, only to submit its duration to the will of God.'

Huysmans in his style is an extraordinary artist and innovator ; in his ideas he seems like a man of the Middle Ages with his wonderful simplicity, a brother of that humble 'Siméon le porcher' of whom he draws such a vivid portrait in *En Route*.

VI

MAURICE ROLLINAT

In 1883 one of the 'sensations' of Paris was the poet Maurice Rollinat, then aged about thirty, already famous by reason of his two volumes of poems *Dans les Brandes* and *Les Névroses*, who in various salons sang his verses to the music he, himself, composed for them. His striking originality, his great gifts, poetic and musical, made him the fashion at one period. Ill-health, however, rendered it advisable for him not to live in Paris. Still the public approval he enjoyed was very pleasant, and he hesitated some time before following medical advice of retiring to the country. One night, so the story goes, after he had sung some of his verses in a *salon* with his usual energy and passion, an old general advanced and asked of him: 'Well, M. Rollinat, are you satisfied with your *performance*?' That decided Rollinat, and he left Paris next day for his native Chateauneuf. His friends, at first, believed this retirement to be a passing caprice, the outcome of pique, but the years went on and Rollinat never returned to Paris. He seems to have been quite content with his quiet provincial life and the pleasure that he found in trout-fishing, or (like his ancestress George Sand) in observation of the peasants living round him—a life which offers a contrast indeed to that of literary favourite, but in which he had the consolation of freedom from the petty jealousies of public life, and where, if the applause be lacking, so likewise is the sting of shifting favour.

As he himself says :—

'It is only the solitary fireside in some lost retreat, which is the mind's best paradise, turning its sadness to work, inspiring its sorrow, rendering fertile its idleness.'

It was here that he wrote *L'abîme* (1886), *La nature* (1892), *Les apparitions* (1896), *Paysages et paysans* (1899), *En Errant* (1903), *Ruminations* (published in 1905). He died mad at Ivry in 1903.

Rollinat is the most direct descendant of Baudelaire, a great disciple who, for some critics, surpasses his master. Like Baudelaire, like Poe, Rollinat loved to conjure up the horrible, to dwell on it; but for this his mind needed no artificial stimulant, his extraordinary imagination sufficed.

Admitting Rollinat to be a disciple of Baudelaire, it follows at once he has a great admiration for Poe. His ideal in music (with Wagner) was Chopin, whom he did not hesitate to call the 'Farouche Edgar Poe of music.' Here is his poem on Poe :—

'Edgar Poe fut démon ne voulant pas être ange,
Au lieu du Rossignol il chanta le Corbeau,
Et, dans le diamant du Mal et de l'Étrange,
Il cisela son rêve effroyablement beau.

Il cherchait dans le gouffre où la raison s'abîme
Les secrets de la Mort et de l'Éternité;
Et son âme, où passait l'éclair sanglant du crime,
Avait le cauchemar de la Perversité.

Chaste, mystérieux, sardonique et féroce,
Il raffine l'Intense, il aiguise l'Atroce;
Son arbre est un cyprès, sa femme un revenant.

Devant son œil de lynx le problème s'éclaire.
Oh, comme je comprends l'amour de Baudelaire
Pour ce grand Ténébreux qu'on lit en frissonnant!'

Rollinat, too, is a *ténébreux*; his mind is full of eerie fancies which have an endless fascination for him :—

'Mon crâne est un cachot plein d'horribles bouffées.
Le fantôme du crime à travers ma raison
Y rode pénétrant comme un regard de fées.'

Fantôme du Crime.[1]

[1] See also *Le Fantôme d'Ursule.*

'Depuis que l'Horreur me fascine,
Je suis l'oiseau de ce serpent.
Je crois toujours qu'on m'assassine,
Qu'on m'empoisonne ou qu'on me pend.'—*L'Angoisse.*

Sensations had created these ideas, and these ideas in their turn create sensations ; they break through the ennui of existence which, after all, for Rollinat is made up of *frissons*—each emotion has its corresponding *frisson* :—

'Un frisson gai naît de l'espoir,
Un frisson grave du devoir,
Mais la Peur est le frisson noir
De la Pensée.

La Peur qui met dans les chemins
Des personnages surhumains.
La Peur aux invisibles mains
Qui revêt l'arbre

D'une carcasse ou d'un linceul,
Qui fait trembler comme un aïeul,
Et qui vous rend, quand on est seul,
Blanc comme un marbre.'

He would say with Gérard de Nerval[1] : 'Crains dans le mur aveugle un regard qui t'épie.'

He puts this same spirit into his landscapes—for example in 'Le Pacage' from *Dans les Brandes* :—

'Couleuvre gigantesque, il s'allonge et se tord,
Tatoué de marais, hérissé de viornes,
Entre deux grands taillis mystérieux et mornes
Qui semblent revêtus d'un feuillage de mort. . . .

Ses buissons où rôde un éternel chuchoteur
Semblent faits pour les yeux des noirs visionnaires ;
Chaque marais croupit sous des joncs centenaires
Presque surnaturels à force de hauteur. . . .

Aussi l'œil du poète halluciné sans trêve
En boit avidement l'austère étrangeté.
Pour ce pâle voyant ce pacage est brouté
Par un bétail magique et tout chargé de rêve. . . .

[1] Gérard de Nerval, a philosopher, has a pantheistic conception lacking in Rollinat.

En automne surtout, à l'heure déjà froide,
Où l'horizon décroît sous le ciel assombri,
Alors qu'en voletant l'oiseau cherche un abri,
Et que les bœufs s'en vont l'œil fixe et le cou roide ;

J'aimais à me trouver dans ce grand pré, tout seul,
Fauve et mystérieux comme un loup dans son antre,
Et je marchais, ayant de l'herbe jusqu'au ventre,
Cependant que la nuit déroulait son linceul.

Alors au fatidique hou-hou-hou des chouettes,
Aux coax révélant d'invisibles marais,
La croissante pénombre où je m'aventurais
Fourmillait vaguement d'horribles silhouettes.

Puis aux lointains sanglots d'un sinistre aboyeur
Les taureaux se ruaient comme un troupeau de buffles,
Et parfois je frôlais des fanons, et des mufles
Dont le souffle brûlant me glaçait de frayeur.'

Directly inspired by Poe, too, are such poems as 'Le Fantôme d'Ursule,' 'L'Enterré Vif,' 'Les Dents,' and the prose tale 'Le Manoir Tragique,' the vision of two knights visibly enemies, a harp which plays of itself, a woman's voice singing, and, finally, the apparition of the woman and the melodramatic tale Rollinat weaves from this material.

In Rollinat again we find the Baudelairian habit of regarding the universe *sub specie æternitatis.*

In his *Ruminations* we find the following passage :—

'Announcements of birth, marriage, decease, are identical for Time, who reads them all three with the same eye in the tomb, since for him fixed for ever in his solitary immanence, indefinite arrivals in the world, marriages here on earth, departure from earth, are accomplished all together at the same hour of eternity; that which must cease to live is already dead.'

And this from *En Errant* :—

'For him who evokes funereal thoughts and who in the sanctuary of a cold wan church suddenly sees a bride all dressed and veiled in white enter with her company, is it not the sudden apparition of death dressed up and heading with pomp and solemnity the train of the living he leads to the tomb?'

He has the same desire to pierce below the surface of things :—

'Who knows what dreadful beds of slime lie under the most brilliantly flourishing grass, the most radiantly scintillating water? Who knows what a foundation of stagnant horror, of serried sadness is under the most brightly shining eyes, the most charming expressions of a smile?'

This is the old, old question :—

'I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !'

The love of perfumes

'(l'on a beau
Vivre ainsi qu'un cadavre au fond de son tombeau
Les parfums sont toujours des illusions neuves)'

is another Baudelairism.

Rollinat, too, has all the Baudelairian animism. He says of the moon :—

'Elle argente sur les talus
Les vieux troncs d'arbres vermoulus
Et rend les saules chevelus
Si fantastiques,
Qu'à ses rayons ensorceleurs
Ils ont l'air de femmes en pleurs
Qui penchent au vent des douleurs
Leurs fronts mystiques.'—*La Lune.*

And the same temper is found in such pieces as 'Le Champ du Diable,' 'Vapeur des Mares,' 'La Voix du Vent' (*Paysages et paysans*) :—

VAPEUR DES MARES

'Le soir, la solitude et la neige s'entendent
Pour faire un paysage affreux de cet endroit
Blêmissant au milieu dans un demi jour froid,
Tandis que ses lointains d'obscurité se tendent.

Çà et là des étangs dont les glaces se fendent
Avec un mauvais bruit qui suscite l'effroi ;
Là-bas dans une terre où le vague s'accroît,
Des corbeaux qui s'en vont et d'autres qui s'attendent.

Voici qu'une vapeur voilée
Sort d'une mare dégelée,
Puis d'une autre et d'une autre encor.

Lugubre hommage en quelque sorte
Qui lentement vers le ciel mort
Monte de la campagne morte.'

LA VOIX DU VENT

'Les nuits d'hiver, quand le vent pleure
Se plaint, hurle, siffle et vagit,
On ne sait quel drame surgit
Dans l'homme ainsi qu'en la demeure.

Sa grande musique mineure
Qui tour à tour, grince et mugit,
Sur toute la pensée agit
Comme une voix intérieure.

Ces cris, cette clameur immense
Chantent la rage, la démence,
La peur, le crime, le remords. . . .

Et voluptueux et funèbres
Accompagnent dans les ténèbres
Les râles d'amour et de mort.'

Nor is the Baudelairian bitterness lacking :—

'Mon cœur repentant
Dont tu te moques,
O Satan,
Est en
Loques.
Oh ! les noirs soliloques
Que je marmotte en boitant !'

Again the piece entitled 'La Gueule' :—

'O fatale rencontre ! au fond d'un chemin creux
Se chauffait au soleil, sur le talus ocreux,
Un reptile aussi long qu'un manche de quenouille.
Mais le saut effaré d'une pauvre grenouille
Montrait que le serpent ne dormait qu'à moitié !
Et je laissai, l'horreur étranglant ma pitié,

Sa gueule se distendre et, toute grande ouverte,
Se fermer lentement sur la victime verte.
Puis le sommeil reprit le hideux animal.
La grenouille, c'est moi ! Le serpent, c'est le mal !'

The piece called 'Le Solitaire,'

'Au sommet de la tour étrange
Habite un énorme crapaud.
—Qui peut t'avoir porté si haut ?
Est-ce un diable ou bien est-ce un ange ?'

though directly inspired by Tristan Corbière, shows strikingly the Baudelairian habit of regarding things from their disquieting standpoint.

The demands Rollinat makes as to the tastes of his ideal woman constitute a kind of Baudelairian creed :—

'Lis-tu dans la nature ainsi qu'en un grand livre ?
En toi l'instinct du mal a-t-il gardé son mors ?
Préfères-tu, trouvant que la douleur enivre,
Le sanglot des vivants au mutisme des morts ?

Et les chats, les grands chats dont la caresse griffe,
Quand ils sont devant l'âtre accroupis de travers,
Saurais-tu déchiffrer le vivant logogriphe
Qu'allume le phosphore au fond de leurs yeux verts ?

As-tu peur du remords plus que du mal physique,
Et vas-tu dans Pascal abreuver ta douleur ?
Chopin est-il pour toi l'Ange de la musique,
Et Delacroix le grand sorcier de la couleur ?

As-tu le rire triste et les larmes sincères,
Le mépris sans effort, l'orgueil sans vanité ?
Fuis-tu les cœurs banals et les esprits faussaires
Dans l'asile du rêve et de la vérité ?'—*L'Introuvable.*

So much, then, for the disciple's debt. Now in what way did Rollinat surpass his master? Above all by his lack of pose, and love of nature.

Rollinat had none of the Baudelairian hatred of the natural merely in so far as it is natural, and Nature in the landscape sense of the word was a great resource for him, whereas for Baudelaire it held none. Thus Rollinat is not Baudelairian when he writes :—

'—Vague du spleen, en vain contre moi tu déferles
Sous l'arceau de verdure où passent des frissons,
J'ai pour me divertir le bruit que font les merles
Avec leur voix aiguë égreneuse de perles !
Et de même qu'ils sont les rires des buissons,
La petite grenouille est l'âme des cressons.'

Le Chemin aux merles.

Nor when he delights in the fact that he is the confidant of Nature's children :—

'A moi le loup rôdant
Et les muets cloportes !
Les choses qu'on dit mortes
M'ont pris pour confident.'—*Le petit Fantôme.*

He repeats the same thing a little further on :—

'Alors, je comprenais le mystère des choses.
Ce verbe de parfums que chuchotent les roses
Vibrait tendre dans mes douleurs :
Ce qui pleure ou qui rit, ce qui hurle ou qui chante,
Tout me parlait alors d'une voix si touchante
Que mes yeux se mouillaient de pleurs.'—*La Confidence.*

One more example—which owes nothing to Baudelaire:—

'La chanson de la perdrix grise,
Ou la complainte des grillons,
C'est la musique des sillons
Que j'ai toujours si bien comprise.

Sous l'azur, dans l'air qui me grise,
Se mêle au vol des papillons
La chanson de la perdrix grise
Ou la complainte des grillons.

Et l'ennui qui me martyrise
Me darde en vain ses aiguillons,
Puisqu'à l'abri des chauds rayons
J'entends sur l'aile de la brise
La chanson de la perdrix grise.'

Here is a domain beyond the reach of Baudelaire, and through the possession of which Rollinat is happier, saner, greater than his master. Had this side been only a little stronger, how much better it would have been for Rollinat ! But this is the weaker side of his temperament. His was a mind unbalanced, and towards the end of his life, under stress of domestic trouble, reason tottered, and before his death completely abandoned him.

VII

RODENBACH

GEORGES RODENBACH is the first of the line of Belgians whose work belongs to French literature, just as the modern Irish literature is counted as English; any exclusion of these poets on the ground of nationality were but artificial.

Rodenbach was born in 1855 at Tournay, where he was educated till 1875, when he entered the University of Gand, graduating there as Doctor of Law. He then went to Paris and availed himself of the opportunities of hearing the famous lawyers. After winning a reputation for himself as a lawyer, he retired again to Belgium, forsaking law for literature, giving himself up to that melancholy contemplative vein which is his characteristic, and the outcome, as in the case of so many of Baudelaire's descendants, of his imperfect health. Lemaître has well said of Rodenbach: 'Few men have possessed to so high a degree the precious gift of amusing themselves with being sad.'

During these years in Belgium he wrote *Tristesses* (1879), *L'Hiver Mondain* (1884), *Jeunesse blanche* (1886), *Mer élégante* (1887).

In 1887 he came to Paris again. He was a member of that literary cénacle who founded the *club des Hydropathes*, and of which Maurice Rollinat, Paul Arène, Emile Goudeau, Paul Bourget, Bastien Lepage, and Sarah Bernhardt were members. It was in this club that he read his novel *L'Art en Exil*, and from this moment date his

more important works—*L'Art en Exil*, a novel (1889), *Le Règne du Silence*, verse (1889), *Bruges la Morte*, a novel (1892), *Voyage dans les Yeux*, verse (1893), *Musée des Béguines*, prose (1894), *Le Voile*, drama in verse (1894), *Le Miroir du ciel natal*, poems (1894), *L'Arbre*, a tale (1898). He died in Paris in 1898—on Christmas morning.

By a curious irony of fate his last work was a poem on the New Year he was never to see. We quote one or two stanzas :—

'La bûche lentement dans l'âtre se consume ;
La chambre songe, encore un peu enluminée
Par la bûche qui est déjà presque posthume,
Chaleur de la dernière bûche de l'année !'

'Ainsi les choses vont.
Tout se hâte, trébuche
Dans l'éternité sans fond,
L'année avec la bûche,

La bûche avec l'année,
On entend s'affliger le vent
Et tout va s'achevant
En un peu de fumée. . . .

Une nouvelle année encor !
Le vent dans la cheminée
N'est plus triste comme le son du cor.
Encore une nouvelle année !
Encore une bûche allumée !'

In the work of Rodenbach we find at once many characteristics derived from Baudelaire. There is the same fear of ennui :—

'La peur que demain soit comme aujourd'hui,
Que l'heure jamais ne sonne autre chose.'
La Vie des chambres XV.

And as the Baudelairians before him, Rodenbach finds the same remedy, that is in his dreams. 'Mon âme,' he says,

'. . . . se console avec la vie en songe
La vie emmaillotée aux langes du mensonge.'

His prayer therefore is,

'O Seigneur, donnez-moi un rêve quotidien. . . .'

Rodenbach is himself like the hero of his *L'Art en Exil*, for whom in the end 'dreams have become more lifelike, more tangible than the realities around him.'

For Rodenbach, as for Baudelaire, mystery has a profound attraction through its suggestiveness. The idea of something hidden—for instance the costume of a nun—never ceased to set him dreaming. In his *Musée des Béguines* (1894), a whole volume is given up to their study. In *Le Voile* (1894), a drama in verse, the hero believes himself to have fallen in love with the beguine who has been sent to nurse his old dying aunt. The one question that haunts him is the problem of the colour of the beguine's hair. He questions her on the subject, but she will tell him nothing. One night he is hurriedly summoned to the old aunt's bedside. Arriving there he finds the beguine, who has come from her room in similar haste and without her hood. He sees the colour of her hair—the mystery is at an end, and with it the attraction :—

'Or mon amour fait de mystère, d'inconnu,
Meurt du voile levé, des cheveux mis à nu . . .
Je la vois ce qu'elle est ; ne la retrouvant plus
Comme l'imaginait mon amour de reclus,
Et sans plus son halo de linge en auréole !
C'est fini ! Tout l'amour brusquement s'étiole
De trop savoir. L'amour a besoin d'un secret.'

He is of the same opinion as Rollinat, who wrote in his *Ruminations* : 'Woman, like the sea, attracts us far more by her fathomless mystery than by any brilliance of exterior.'

The same idea recurs in his story *L'Art en Exil*.

Here again the hero is attracted by the mystery of a nun. He marries her. Then comes the disillusion—she is far from realising his exceptional hopes. He gives her Wagner's music—she will not play it. He reads his favourite poets to her—Baudelaire and Hugo—she does not listen. It is still worse when he comes to compose his great poem of which he had dreamed so long :—

'This dreamed-of poem was only a symbol, the symbol of his own life stagnant among the cold stones, exhausted but harmonious as bells across the mist; pierced with little light, a sister of those suburbs where the lamps are few.'

He works at it with great enthusiasm :—

'With one great effort he had raised high this tower of his sorrow, the materials for which had lain so long unused in the dust of his soul.'

Finally he reads it to his wife, who completes the growing disillusion by inquiring how much money the poem will bring in : 'She had understood the frenzy of the Cross, she could not understand the frenzy of Art.'

Love of the mysterious has played him a cruel trick : 'She was like all other women.'

The Baudelairian impossibility to gaze on a cradle without being led to think of a tomb is also present in Rodenbach. Take, for instance, the poem he composed on an infant who died immediately after its baptism, and the reflections he makes :—

'Hélas ! l'hiver touche au printemps,
Et la mort touche à la naissance.

L'aube a son sourire et ses pleurs,
L'air ses vautours et ses colombes,
Sous la verdure et sous les fleurs
Naissent les berceaux et les tombes !

On fait souvent un linceul froid
D'un voile de fête splendide :
On construit un cercueil étroit
Avec le bois d'un berceau vide ! . . .'

The most distinctive trait of Rodenbach's writings is his love of assigning a reasoning existence to the inanimate world around him ; he carries this Baudelairian faculty to a very high pitch.

He loved those 'troubled hours when'

'Tout devient nostalgique et commémoratif ;
Le jet d'eau raccourci prend la forme d'un if ;
La fumée, au-dessus du douteux paysage,
Doucement se dévoile en langoureux tissu
Où menace, dans l'air, un texte entr'apercu,
Et dans la lune pâle, on a peur d'un visage.'
Au Fil de l'âme, xii.

Like Gérard de Nerval and Rollinat, he feared a watching eye in the blank wall. As he explains it,

'Or mes yeux sont aussi les vitres condamnées
D'une maison en deuil du départ des années,
Et c'est pourquoi, du fond de ces lointains du nord,
Je me sens regardé par ces yeux sans envie
Qui ne se tournent plus du côté de la vie,
Mais sont orientés du côté du tombeau.'—*Paysages de Ville*, iv.

A considerable division of his volume called *Le Règne du Silence* is devoted to the consideration of *la vie des chambres*. Here is a good example of his attitude :—

'L'obscurité, dans les chambres, le soir, est une
Irréconciliable apporteuse de craintes ;
En deuil, s'habillant d'ombre et de linges de lune,
Elle inquiète ; elle a de félines étreintes,
Comme une eau des canaux traîtres où l'on se noie.
L'obscurité, c'est la tueuse de la Joie
Qui dépérit, bouquet de roses transitoires,
Quand elle y verse un peu de ses fioles noires.
L'obscurité s'installe avec le crépuscule ;
Elle descend dans l'âme aussi qui s'enténèbre ;
Sur le miroir heureux tombe un crêpe funèbre ;
La clarté, dirait-on, est blessée et recule
Vers la fenêtre où s'offre un linceul de dentelle. . . .' etc.

In the same way he is profoundly affected by the contemplation of what he calls *le cœur de l'eau.*

'Son amour du repos, son dégoût de la vie
Sont si contagieux que plus d'un l'a suivie
Dans la chapelle d'ombre au fond pieux des eaux
Où, tranquille, elle chante au pied des longs roseaux
Dont l'orgue aux verts tuyaux l'accompagnent en sourdine.'

One more quotation—this time from *Le Miroir du Ciel Natal*:—

'La Nuit est seule, comme un pauvre.
Les réverbères offrent
Leur flamme jaune
Comme une aumône.

La Nuit se tait comme une église close.
Les réverbères mélancoliques
Ouvrent leur flamme rose,
Comme des bouquets de lumières,
Des bouquets sous un verre et qui sont des reliques,
Par qui la Nuit s'emplit d'Indulgences plénières.

La Nuit souffre !
Les réverbères en chœur
Dardent leur flamme rouge et souffre
Comme des ex-votos,
Comme des Sacré-Cœur,
Que le vent fait saigner avec ses froids couteaux.

La Nuit s'exalte !
Les réverbères à la file
Déploient leur flamme bleue
Dans les banlieues,
Comme des âmes qui font halte,
Les âmes en chemin des morts de la journée,
Qui rêvent d'entrer dans leur maison fermée,
Et s'attardent longtemps aux portes de la ville.'

Les Réverbères.

So intense does this life of objects become, according to Rodenbach, that it develops an extraordinary power of suggestion. There is a tale in his *Contes posthumes* which is a striking example of this. It is the story of a man, who, though in reality much attached to his wife,

becomes irritated by her, and on a sudden impulse kills her. The source of this impulse was a passing train :—

'In the blackness of night a black train. It passed by with the sound of disaster, uttering a piercing shriek. I only noticed one thing: the lamp in front of the engine. It was red, a fearful red like a recent wound, an enormous round wound. The night seemed wounded. This great red spot was blood. Yes, the wound was bleeding, but the blood could hardly coagulate; then suddenly it seemed as if the blood of this light overflowed; the red wound widened, came nearer, splashed over my eyes, my hands, the whole country. An immense wound! Was the night going to die? Now at that very second I conceived the idea of the murder.'

In the same way in the Preface of his *Bruges la Morte*, that record of a man's failure to rehabilitate the ideal of his dead wife in a living woman who resembled her, he says :—

'In this study of passion we have wished at the same time and above all to evoke a city, the city as an essential character associated with the states of mind that counsel, dissuade, and determine action. Thus, in reality, this Bruges that it has pleased us to describe seems almost human. . . . An influence is established by her upon those who stay there. She fashions them in accordance with her sites and steeples. That is what we hoped to suggest: the city directing action; and the scenery of the city not merely like the background of a picture, in descriptive themes somewhat arbitrarily chosen, but bound to the whole plot of the book.'

Critics have often reproached Rodenbach for always laying his scenes in Bruges, for not varying his background. The objection seems to us an idle one—like crying out against Mr. Kipling for using India as his setting, or against Mr. Hardy for his similar use of Wessex. It matters little that the poet uses the same background so long as with it he has something fresh to say. But this is precisely where Rodenbach fails—once start him on an idea and he wears it threadbare. He finds Sundays very tiresome, and repeats the fact

throughout a hundred pages. After reading them, we feel we have lived through *months* of Sundays.

Fiction, like history, only records the exceptional, still more then do we demand the exceptional from poetry. It is well for the poet

> 'To see a world in a grain of sand
> And a heaven in a wild flower.'

The mystery of Nature will be always moving; but we find it difficult to be moved by the aspirations of a weathercock. Not so Rodenbach :—

> 'En ces villes qu'attriste un chœur de girouettes,
> Oiseaux de fer rêvant de fuir au haut des airs.'

And here are the feelings of the water in an aquarium :—

> 'Dans le verre elle s'est close et se tient coite,
> Moins en souci des vains reflets et du réel,
> Que d'être ainsi quelque mystère qui scintille. . . .
> Avec l'orgueil un peu triste d'être inutile !'—*Les Vies encloses*, xi.

Bells too form a varied society :—

> 'D'autres cloches sont des béguines
> Qui sortent, l'une après l'autre, de leur clocher,
> Tel que d'un couvent, à matines,
> Et se hâtent en un cheminement frileux,
> Comme s'il allait neiger. . . .
>
> Il en est, en robes de bronze,
> Qui tintent, tintent ;
> Et s'éloignent, geignant des plaintes indistinctes,
> Et des demandes sans réponse.
>
> Il en est qui vivotent seules,
> Comme des aïeules,
> Dans la tristesse et le brouillard ;
> Et qui ont toujours l'air,
> Dans l'air,
> De suivre un corbillard.'—*Les Cloches*.

And since a town has a life of its own, it follows that it can also have an illness :—

> 'La maladie atteint aussi les pauvres villes . . .
> Telles vont dépérir d'un mal confus et doux ;

A peine elles naissent ; mais leurs cloches débiles
Sont comme les accès d'une petite toux.'

Stevenson says in his 'Essay on Gas Lamps' that with their invention the work of Prometheus had advanced by another stride. 'The city folk had stars of their own ; biddable, domesticated stars.' Rodenbach is of the same opinion, and devoted a whole series of poems to *Les Réverbères*. Here again he has harped too long on one string, has carried his theories too far.[1] Of a room at the hour of lighting the lamps he says :—

'Le vieux salon était comme un veuf,
Accablé par l'ombre unie au silence ;
On dirait maintenant qu'il se recommence
Avec un cœur neuf.'—*Les Lampes*, xii.

Or again :—

'La chambre s'étonne
De ce bonheur qui dure ;
Elle rit, elle est guérie
De la pauvreté d'être obscure . . .
Elle est comme celui qui a reçu l'aumône.'—*Les Lampes*, i.

In the same way does night take pity on an old wall :—

'Or la Lune est montée au ciel dans un halo,
Et les carillons noirs égrènent leur rosaire . . .
C'est alors que le Soir, soudain apitoyé
Pour les vieux murs que nul n'assiste en leurs désastres,
Envoie à tel ou tel vieux mur pauvre et ployé
Des linges de lumière et des aumônes d'astres.'

[1] It is very interesting to see what Huysmans thought of Rodenbach ; he is entirely untroubled by any literary jealousy of the latter. Here is what he says: 'Rodenbach was one of the most extraordinary virtuosi of our time. Upon one or two themes that he chose from among those whose originality had not struck any one else, he broidered the most delicate variations, continually using unexpected comparisons, new metaphors. Imagine one of those fruitless poetical competitions, with the given subject *Street Lamps* ; every one would think it a thankless task to develop such a theme, and would rack his brains to throw off a few lines. *He* made light of these difficulties and set down, in honour of these lamps, seven improbable charming poems, full of unknown comparisons and hitherto hardly suspected analogies ; he gave life to these street lights, transformed them into sensitive beings, whose plaints he then related with great tenderness.'—Huysmans, *De tout*, p. 215.

Baudelaire's love of the exceptional would have kept him from these pitfalls of animism; but if Rodenbach loves the exceptional, it is only in so far as it is embodied in the commonplace objects around us. Herein he is simpler than Baudelaire. If he borrowed from the *Fleurs du Mal*, it was from their pious side, for example, in his poems on the Host:—

'O le beau clair de lune qu'est l'hostie;
Le prêtre à l'autel l'a brandie;
Et sa tonsure pâle est comme une autre hostie. . . .

Et dans l'hostie on croit voir par moments
La face de Jésus s'ébaucher en du sang
A cause des reflets des cierges par moments.'

Rodenbach's books are like the town he celebrated so often and in which he spent his youth, by those dreamy canals whose banks are ever the haunt of memories.

They have the veiled charm of Flemish landscape, the devout perfume of that Bruges long since sanctified by Memlinc, where at evening the lights before its convents are like nuns watching before an altar.

The chimes dancing up and down the stairs of the black gables, the *béguinage* with its daisy-enamelled pavement, the convents with their crumbling stone walls, and all those primitive Flemish masterpieces impregnate the old town's heroic, pious, past history with a strange enchantment.

You will find exactly the same thing in Rodenbach's poetry.

VIII

MALLARMÉ

AMONG the modern poets, the Symbolist school in its very essence owes something to the Baudelairians.

In the first place, it is a suggestive school, and suggestion as opposed to didactics is one of the chief Baudelairian weapons *suggérer tout l'homme par tout l'art*,[1] one of their highest aims. The Symbolists use myth and legend for their aims. These are no new weapons, but they are put to a new use; they no longer serve as brilliant romantic anecdotes. The Symbolists in France (just as Hebbel and Gerhard Hauptmann in Germany) use them purely for their suggestiveness, and this is a Baudelairian attitude.

M. Remy de Gourmont, speaking of the Symbolist school, says that with it 'a new truth has entered into literature and art—the principle of the ideality of the world.'

This principle was already present in one aspect of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's writings, in those of Barbey d'Aurevilly, and of Rollinat.

It is by this aspect of his work that Mallarmé, the leader of the Symbolists, is Baudelairian.

Mallarmé's importance lies not so much in the very

[1] The Symbolist school has at last found its philosopher in the person of M. Henri Bergson. The affirmation of unconscious psychical states is one of the essential doctrines of M. Bergson's philosophy, and at the same time the great truth after which the Symbolists were groping. The enthusiasm with which M. Bergson tries to bring to light the inexpressible in the life of the soul makes him not only the real theoretician of this school but a great poet as well.

slender bulk of his writings, as in the influence that he himself had on the younger generation that loved to gather round him. He belongs to that race of *causeurs* upon whom, while they talk, ideas come thronging with perfect clearness, but from whom lucidity is the first trait to recede when they take pen in hand, and would transfer their ideas to paper. Mallarmé was more than a poet, he was a theorist and, as such, an educator. It was in his rooms in the Rue de Rome, on the famous Tuesday evenings, that he talked great literature for twenty years, while all artistic Paris listened. He was the last æsthete of language—and we are still waiting for his Boswell.

We who have not heard him talk, who were not present at his explanations of his ideas, cannot fully penetrate his work; yet uninitiated though we be, we can hope to understand the general tendency, and we do find delight in his subtle art.

It was Huysmans who first revealed Mallarmé to the general public.[1] And in his criticism Huysmans touches on one of the points wherein Mallarmé is carrying on the Baudelairian theory of correspondences. For it is this doctrine that leads Mallarmé, in Huysmans' words,

> 'perceiving the most distant analogies . . . to designate often with a single term which gives at once, by an effect of resemblance, the form, perfume, colour, quality, brilliance of the object or being to which he would have to couple many different epithets in order to bring out all its appearances, all its shades, had it been merely indicated by its technical name.'

The most striking trait of Mallarmé's work is his effort to extract the extraordinary, the exceptional from the most commonplace act or object. The *Nénuphar Blanc* is a good example of this with its portrayal of the man rowing towards a garden on the river, and striving in the meantime to idealise the aspect of his actions and thoughts.

[1] *A Rebours*, p. 260.

In another of his prose sketches, *Le Spectacle Interrompu*, he exclaims :—

'How far is civilisation from procuring the delight attributable to this state! It is astonishing, for example, that there does not exist an association in every great town of the dreamers living there to subscribe to a paper which should report events in that light likely to produce a dream.'

The conclusion of the sketch is eminently characteristic :—

'I got up like every one else to breathe the air outside, astonished once more at not having received the same impression as my kind, but serene: for my point of view was after all superior and even the right one.'

Mallarmé's work reposes in this way on a philosophical basis, of which the keynote is the postulate that the world in which we live is only a pure conception of the mind, a theory which of course is to be found in the philosophy of Plato or of Fichte or of Hegel. Thence he set out to try and write a poetry which should be the fusion of all our thoughts and emotions; a poetry which should embrace the whole universe. Each line must be at one and the same time a thought, a feeling, and a picture; each word must be a precious stone fitting into the mosaic of the whole. Obviously such poems cannot be of dazzling clearness.

'Le ciel est mort. Vers toi, j'accours! donne, ô matière
L'oubli de l'Idéal cruel, et du Péché
A ce martyr qui vient partager la litière
Où le bétail heureux des hommes est couché,'

says Mallarmé, with Baudelairian melancholy.

This melancholy, too, is a humour in which Mallarmé likes to indulge.

'Ma songerie aimant à me martyriser
S'enivrant savamment du parfum de tristesse
Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse
La cueillaison d'un rêve au cœur qui l'a cueilli.'

The debt to Baudelaire is again clear in his sonnet 'Le Sonneur':—

LE SONNEUR

'Cependant que la cloche éveille sa voix claire
A l'air pur et limpide et profond du matin,
Et passe sur l'enfant qui jette pour lui plaire
Un angélus parmi la lavande et le thym,
Le sonneur effleuré par l'oiseau qu'il éclaire,
Chevauchant tristement en geignant du latin
Sur la pierre qui tend la corde séculaire,
N'entend descendre à lui qu'un tintement lointain.
Je suis cet homme. Hélas! de la nuit désireuse,
J'ai beau tirer le câble à sonner l'Idéal,
De froids péchés s'ébat un plumage féal,
Et la voix ne me vient que par bribes et creuse!
Mais, un jour, fatigué d'avoir enfin tiré,
O Satan, j'ôterai la pierre et me pendrai.'

And the ennui of Hérodias takes on the same characteristics under Mallarmé's touch:—

'O miroir!
Eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée,
Que de fois, et pendant les heures, désolée
Des songes et cherchant mes souvenirs qui sont
Comme des feuilles sous ta glace au trou profond,
Je m'apparus en toi comme une ombre lointaine!
Mais, horreur! des soirs, dans ta sévère fontaine,
J'ai de mon rêve épars connu la nudité!'

The same Baudelairian debt is perceptible in the following piece:—

BRISE MARINE

'La chair est triste, hélas! et j'ai lu tous les livres.
Fuir! là-bas fuir! Je sens que des oiseaux sont ivres
D'être parmi l'écume inconnue et les cieux!
Rien, ni les vieux jardins réflétés par les yeux
Ne retiendra ce cœur qui dans la mer se trempe,
O nuits! ni la clarté déserte de ma lampe
Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend,
Et ni la jeune femme allaitant son enfant.
Je partirai! Steamer balançant ta mâture
Lève l'ancre pour une exotique nature!

Un Ennui, désolé par les cruels espoirs,
Croit encore à l'adieu suprême des mouchoirs !
Et, peut-être, les mâts, invitant les orages
Sont-ils de ceux qu'un vent penche sur les naufrages
Perdus, sans mâts, sans mâts, ni fertiles îlots . . .
Mais, ô mon cœur, entend le chant des matelots !'

Artists are sometimes terribly discerning. The frontispiece to the volume of Mallarmé's poems is an etching by Félicien Rops, showing the poet seated on a chair, the back of which is a mark of interrogation.

For Mallarmé, our subconsciousness seems to have been this mark of interrogation. 'Every clear idea,' he would reason, 'has been expressed by my predecessors. It only remains to force the great waves in the ocean of our subconsciousness to some stammering utterance.'

Rodenbach had set forth on the same errand. He said:

Nous ne savons de notre âme que la surface.

Then came Mallarmé, who in his turn aimed at showing that our knowledge of our soul is the merest superficiality.

Looked at in this way, poetry is no longer the commonplace story of a poet's life, a kind of Wordsworthian Prelude; rather is it a breath from the inner, unknown, true life of the soul.

If you turn to Mallarmé's poem, *Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire*, written to honour the later poet's master, you find two or three images born in the troubled depths of subconsciousness covering the whole piece with a kind of opium-atmosphere.

The Baudelairians loved the autumn of things; the freshness of spring makes no appeal, while the sad promiseless beauty of autumn is full of suggestiveness. It is the same with Mallarmé; he loves to contemplate *la grâce des choses fanées*. He confesses to a fondness for everything, which is implied by the word *chute*:—

'Thus, in the year my favourite season is in those last languid days of summer which immediately precede autumn; and in the day the hour at which I take my walk is when the sun rests, before disappearing, with brassy light on the grey walls, and coppery light on the windows. In the same way the literature in which my soul seeks delight is the dying poetry of Rome's last moments—though only so long as it holds no hint of the rejuvenating approach of the Barbarians, and does not stammer the childish Latin of early Christian prose.'

These literary tastes seem like a reminiscence of Huysmans.

Mallarmé was a far greater idealist than Baudelaire. The Poësque love of the horrible has no counterpart in his work, though Poe as a poet he admired immensely, translating first 'the Raven,' and finally all the poems, into a prose version which is frequently more beautiful than the original, and though Dr. Johnson would condemn, we take the liberty of being grateful. The pity was that Mallarmé carried the Baudelairian hatred of 'popular' art to its highest degree, finally translating 'popular' by 'intelligible.' The extraordinary lyric power of his 'Hérodiade' only makes us the more regret the impenetrable obscurity of much of his more advanced work.

The dignity of classical drama, with its refusal to include the people in its rôles, has made it a dead thing. The intense aloofness of Mallarmé's school has been the cause of its ultimate failure. Still, in parting with Mallarmé we may quote those words of Huysmans who rightly loved the poet:—

'Who in a century of universal suffrage, in an age of lucre, sheltered from the stupidity around him by his disdain, taking pleasure, far from the world in the surprises of the intellect, grafting them with Byzantine artifice, perpetuating them in lightly sketched deductions which a scarcely perceptible thread held together.'

IX

ALBERT SAMAIN

ALBERT SAMAIN, a native of Lille, was born in 1859. He left school to become a bank clerk, continuing his reading in the meanwhile. His talent was of slow development. In 1882 he came to Paris, and obtained employment at the Préfecture de la Seine. He wrote for the *Chat Noir*, *Scapin*, and the *Mercure de France*, in which last were published most of the poems of the *Jardin de l'Infante*. It was not until 1893 that he was persuaded to publish separately the *Jardin de l'Infante*, which at once attracted a great deal of notice.

Samain is full of early romanticism, of the romanticism of the 1830 period. There is the same voluntary sadness, the same regrets, the same contempt for commonplace, the same pessimism.

> 'La Vie est comme un grand violon qui sanglote . . .
> O mon cœur, laisse-moi m'envelopper d'ailleurs,
> Laisse la rue à ceux que leur âme importune,
> Pour toi respire, ainsi qu'un trésor clandestin,
> Le lys de solitude à ton balcon hautain. . . .'

But his second volume, *Aux Flancs du Vase* (1898), revealed a different temper, more sincere and more original. Soon after the publication of this volume he suffered a severe blow in the loss of his mother, with whom he had always lived, and for whom he had shown such a deep devotion. He had long suffered from a lung affection, and after travelling in search of cure, first to

Villefranche and then to Magny-les-Hameaux, he died in 1900.

Samain had a great admiration for Edgar Poe. In the *Notes Inédites* we find this entry:—

'I have been reading Poe this week. Decidedly he is to be ranked among the greatest. The powerfulness of his conceptions, the magnificence of his hypotheses, the marvellous force of his imagination which is always regulated and maintained by an extraordinary will, render him an almost unique figure in art. If the word perfection could be pronounced, it is for a case like this.'

The influence of Poe on Samain is overshadowed by the influence of Baudelaire, yet the poem 'Les Ténèbres' is full of Poësque effect:—

TÉNÈBRES

'Les heures de la nuit sont lentes et funèbres.
Frère, ne trembles-tu jamais en écoutant,
Comme un bruit sourd de mer lointaine qu'on entend,
La respiration tragique des ténèbres?

Les Heures de la nuit sont filles de la peur;
Leur souffle fait mourir l'âme humble des veilleuses,
Cependant que leurs mains froides et violeuses
S'allongent sous les draps pour saisir notre cœur.

Pâle, j'écoute, au bord du silence béant;
La nuit autour de moi, muette et sépulcrale,
S'ouvre comme une haute et sombre cathédrale
Où le bruit de mes pas fait sonner du néant.

J'écoute, et la sueur coule à ma tempe blême,
Car dans l'ombre une main spectrale m'a tendu
Une funèbre miroir où je vois, confondu,
Monter vers moi du fond mon image elle-même.

Et peu à peu j'éprouve à me dévisager,
Comme une inexprimable et poignante souffrance,
Tant je me sens lointain, tant ma propre apparence
Me semble en cet instant celle d'un étranger.

Ma vie est là pourtant, très exacte et très vraie,
Harnais quotidien, sonnailles de grelots,
Comédie et roman, faux rêves, faux sanglots,
Et cette herbe des sens folle, comme l'ivraie. . . .

De mortelles vapeurs assiègent mon cerveau. . . .
Une vieille en cheveux, qui rôde dans les tombes,
Ricane, en égorgeant lentement des colombes ;
Et sa main de squelette agrippe mon manteau. . . .'

In many places in the *Jardin de l'Infante* the influence of Baudelaire is very plain. In the first place, it is from Baudelaire that Samain gets his humour of melancholy disenchantment :—

'Le dégoût d'exister qui me remonte aux dents.'
Fourth Sonnet of L'Allée Solitaire.

He would say with Baudelaire :—

'L'irrésistible nuit établit son empire,
Noire, humide, funeste et pleine de frissons' ;

or to quote his own words :—

'Le siècle d'or se gâte ainsi qu'un fruit meurtri.
Le cœur est solitaire, et nul Sauveur n'enseigne. . . .
Ces gouttes dans la nuit ? . . . C'est ton âme qui saigne !
Qui de nous le premier va jeter un grand cri ?

Un mal ronge le monde au cœur comme une teigne,
Car la lettre charnelle a suborné l'esprit,
Et nul ne voit le mur où la main chaste écrit :
" Que le feu de la fête impudique s'éteigne ! "

L'œil morne a parjuré la lumière bénie ;
Et la lampe, soleil fiévreux de l'insomnie,
Luit seule en nos tombeaux d'or sombre et de velours,

Où, pâle et succombant sous les colliers trop lourds,
Aux sons plus torturés de l'archet plus acide,
L'art, languide énervé,—suprême ! se suicide.'

The opening of his song 'Accompagnement' is pure Samain :—

'Tremble argenté, tilleul, bouleau. . . .
La lune s'effeuille sur l'eau. . . .
. . . . .
La rame tombe et se relève,
Ma barque glisse dans le rêve !'

but then falls into pure Baudelaire :—

'Des deux rames que je balance,
L'une est Langueur, l'autre est Silence. . . .

Comme la lune sur les eaux,
Comme la rame sur les flots,
Mon âme s'effeuille en sanglots !'

With Baudelaire, Samain would demand of his ideal 'Sois belle et sois triste.' His love songs have a kind of Tristan music :—

'Pourquoi nos soirs d'amour n'ont-ils toute douceur,
Que si l'âme trop pleine en lourds sanglots s'y brise ?
La Tristesse nous hante avec sa robe grise,
Et vit à nos côtés comme une grande sœur.'—*Douleur.*

Or again this from 'Ermione'—

'Et quand je te quittai, j'emportai de cette heure,
Du ciel et de tes yeux, de ta voix et du temps,
Un mystère à traduire en mots inconsistants,

Le charme d'un sourire indéfini qui pleure,
Et dans l'âme, un écho d'automne qui demeure,
Comme un sanglot de cor perdu sur les étangs.' . . .

And the same humour recurs in his 'Vieilles Cloches,' 'Vas Tristitiæ' :—

'La foi des nations s'en va, pauvre exilée.
Le mauvais serviteur commande à la maison.
L'étoile du berger aussi s'en est allée ;
Et Notre-Dame en deuil regarde, inconsolée,
Descendre le soleil gothique à l'horizon.

Une lueur encor flotte, à s'éteindre prompte,
Rouge adieu sanglotant des pourpres de jadis.
Nos cœurs ont froid. La nuit d'une angoisse nous dompte. . . .
Écoute ! . . . On chante les derniers *de Profundis.*
Et voici que le spleen, le spleen lunaire monte !'

Melancholy remains a dominant feature of Samain's poetry :—

'L'eau musicale et triste est la sœur de mon rêve.
Ma tasse est diaphane, et je porte, sans fin,
Un cœur mélancolique où la lune se lève.'—*Extrême-Orient.*

His ideal of beauty must also contain something of the Baudelairian mystery, something undefinable. Like Verlaine, he would claim 'nous ne voulons que la nuance encore.'

'Car j'ai l'amour subtil du crépuscule fin'
(*Extrême-Orient*)

he says, and develops the same idea in 'Dilection':—

'J'adore l'indécis, les sons, les couleurs frêles,
Tout ce qui tremble, ondule, et frissonne, et chatoie,
Les cheveux et les yeux, l'eau, les feuilles, la soie
Et la spiritualité des formes grêles; . . .
. . . . . .
Et tel cœur d'ombre chaste, embaumé de mystère,
Où veille, comme le rubis d'un lampadaire,
Nuit et jour un amour mystique et solitaire.'

Samain does not deny the beauty of the more joyous side of life; he tells us that he also loves

'La grand'rue au village, un dimanche matin,
La vache au bord de l'eau toute rose d'aurore,
La fille aux claires dents, la feuille humide encore,
Et le divin cristal d'un bel œil enfantin.'

This, however, is not the aspect that appeals to him most strongly:—

'Mais je préfère une âme à l'ombre agenouillée,
Les grands bois à l'automne et leur odeur mouillée,
La route où tinte au soir un grelot de chevaux,
La lune dans la chambre à travers les rideaux,
Une main pâle et douce et lente qui se pose,
Deux grands yeux pleins d'un feu triste, et sur toute chose,
Une voix qui voudrait sangloter et qui n'ose. . . .'

Finally, the ideal is antiutilitarian:—

'Je suis la Coupe d'or, fille du temps païen;
Et depuis deux mille ans je garde, à jamais pure,
L'incorruptible orgueil de ne servir à rien.'

The portrayal of women in this volume is copied from Baudelaire. A good example is the poem 'Une':—

'Sphynx aux yeux d'émeraude, angélique vampire,
Elle rêve sous l'or cruel de ses frisons;
La rougeur de sa bouche est pareille aux tisons.
Ses yeux sont faux, son cœur est faux, son amour pire.

Sous son front dur médite un songe obscur d'empire.
Elle est la fleur superbe et froide des poisons,
Et le péché mortel aux âcres floraisons,
De sa chair vénéneuse en parfums noirs transpire.

Sur son trône, qu'un art sombre sut tourmenter,
Immobile, elle écoute au loin se lamenter
La mer des pauvres cœurs qui saignent ses blessures ;

Et bercée aux sanglots, elle songe, et parfois
Brûle d'un regard lourd, où couvent des luxures,
L'âme vierge du lys qui se meurt dans ses doigts.'

This is an attitude which scarcely harmonises with the almost Coventry Patmore tone of many pieces in 'Aux Flancs du Vase.' Those features of Baudelairism which Samain merely copied, which are, in him, a mere pose, he naturally dropped as his talent became more mature. The volumes which follow *Le Jardin de l'Infante* have very little Baudelairism in them.

In his later poems Samain turned for inspiration to Antiquity; he breaks away again from Baudelairian tradition. M. Léon Bocquet quotes from a letter Samain wrote to M. Paul Morisse (16th December 1896) :—

'The antiquity which appeals to me is not barbaric, sinister, nor rugged like that in *Salammbô*, for example, or Leconte de Lisle's work; it is rather measured, calm, and smiling as in the Homerides. Moreover it is not antiquity, it is simply the harmonious simple spirit of beauty which I feel antiquity has realised, and which is eternal as the limpidity of springs, as the perfume of roses.'

Which is quite opposed to Baudelairian tradition.

Samain lacked the force of Baudelaire; he is, as an English critic has put it, 'a poet of fine shades.' His poetry—his later poetry that is—is full of a gentle sadness which is another thing than the passionate disenchantment of Baudelaire. He summed himself up very happily in the lines :—

'Mon âme est un velours douloureux que tout froisse ;
Et je sens, en mon cœur lourd d'ineffable angoisse,
Je ne sais quoi de doux, qui voudrait bien mourir.'

X

JULES LAFORGUE

M. CAMILLE MAUCLAIR in his singularly penetrating essay on Jules Laforgue places him among that class of minds whose ruling characteristic is what he names *la diversité dans l'unité.*

'Everything tends to a single increase: *comprehension by means of passion*—there is no idleness in them. They knock at all the multitudinous doors of feeling through which a new aspect of the spiritual city is to be seen, and one meets them simultaneously on all the roads that lead thither. . . . He (Laforgue) appears indeed to be of that race of writers who are not occupied first of all with collecting their faculties of expression for the achievement of a work, but desire above all to compose with them a life which shall be more curious, more ornate, more conscious. With the surplus of their mental acquisitions, and their means, they make books as if to show others what is going on inside them.'

Jules Laforgue accomplished his part in a remarkably short time. He was born in August of 1860, and was brought up in Paris till he was called to Berlin to become reader to the Empress Augusta. In 1886 he relinquished this employment and came to Paris, with high hopes of gaining fame and fortune through his writings, and of happiness with that girl who skated so gracefully in Berlin, attracting first his artistic sense, then capturing his heart—for the moment. He married her in the beginning of the year 1887—there was but short-lived happiness. His writings from the commercial standpoint were doomed

to failure. He was consumptive, and poverty rapidly aggravated the disease, and in August of the year of his marriage he died, at the age of twenty-seven.

The work he leaves behind consists of a volume of poems, the curious prose *Moralités Légendaires*, and a few fragmentary critical notes. Though small in bulk it is enough to show us a highly artistic and original mind.

There is a good deal of Baudelaire in Jules Laforgue. In one of his critical notes he condemns exaggeration, and finds in this the great drawback of Baudelaire's disciples. 'Tous ses élèves,' he says, 'ont glissé dans le paroxysme, dans l'horrible plat comme des carabins d'estaminets.'

But for Baudelaire himself he had a sincere admiration. He wrote of him :—

'Baudelaire may be a cynic, or mad: he is never gross; there is never a wrong fold in the impressions in which he clothes himself. He is always courteous with ugliness. He behaves well. . . . His images are an Anglo-American importation applied to the Song of Songs. His melancholy the void of the man of letters disgusted by his age, and who has been born idle and royal.'

Which is acute enough.

Baudelaire's influence appears directly in many places in Laforgue's poems. Here is all the Baudelairian sense of solitude :—

'Ah! ces voix dans la nuit chantant Noël! Noël!
M'apportent de la nef qui là-bas s'illumine
Un si tendre, un si doux reproche maternel,
Que mon cœur trop gonflé crève dans ma poitrine . . .
Et j'écoute longtemps les cloches, dans la nuit . . .
Je suis le paria de la famille humaine,
A qui le vent apporte en son sale réduit
La poignante rumeur d'une fête lointaine.'—*Noël Sceptique.*

What, too, could be more Baudelairian than the *Litanies de mon sacré-cœur.*

'Prométhée et Vautour, châtiment et blasphème,
Mon cœur, cancer sans cœur, se grignote lui-même.

Mon cœur est une urne où j'ai mis certains défunts,
Oh ! chut, refrains de leurs berceaux ! et vous parfums . . .

Mon cœur est un lexique où cent littératures
Se lardent sans répit de divines ratures.

Mon cœur est un désert altéré, bien que soûl
De ce vin revomi, l'universel dégoût.

Mon cœur est un Néron, enfant gâté d'Asie,
Qui d'empires de rêve en vain se rassasie.

Mon cœur est un noyé vidé d'âme et d'essors,
Qu'étreint la pieuvre Spleen en ses ventouses d'or. . . .

Mon cœur est une horloge oubliée à demeure,
Qui, me sachant défunt, s'obstine à sonner l'heure ! . . .'

And this again :—

'Voici venir le soir, doux au vieillard lubrique.
Mon chat Mürr accroupi comme un sphinx héraldique
Contemple, inquiet, de sa prunelle fantastique,
Marcher à l'horizon la lune chlorotique. . . .

Je songe aux enfants qui partout viennent de naître,
Je songe à tous les morts enterrés d'aujourd'hui,
Et je me figure être au fond du cimetière
Et me mets à la place, en entrant dans leur bière,
De ceux qui vont passer là leur première nuit.'

Le Sanglot de la Terre. La première Nuit.

Is this not a complete expression of the Baudelairian conflicting temperament? Next he shows us the same pessimism, the same delight in indulging in melancholy:—

'L'extase du soleil, peuh ! La Nature, fade
Usine de sève aux lymphatiques parfums.
Mais les lacs éperdus des longs couchants défunts
Dorlotent mon voilier dans leurs plus riches rades
Comme un ange malade. . . .
O Notre Dame des Soirs,
Que je vous aime sans espoir.'

There is the same restless questioning :—

'Tout est-il seul ? Où suis-je ? Où va ce bloc qui roule
Et m'emporte ? Et je puis mourir ! mourir ! partir
Sans rien savoir ! Parlez ! ô rage ! et le temps coule
Sans retour ! Arrêtez, arrêtez ! Et jouir ?

Car j'ignore tout, moi ! mon heure est là peut-être ?
Je ne sais pas ! J'étais de la nuit, puis je nais.
Pourquoi ! D'où l'univers ? Où va-t-il ? car le prêtre
N'est qu'un homme. On ne sait rien. Montre-toi, parais,
Dieu, témoin éternel ! Parle ! Pourquoi la vie ?
Tout se tait !' *Eclair de gouffre.*

Which, though metaphysically interesting, is scarcely poetry. A more poetic expression of these ideas occurs in the 'Nobles et touchantes Divagations sous la Lune' :—

'Un chien perdu grelotte en abois à la Lune. . . .
Oh ! pourquoi ce sanglot quand nul ne l'a battu ?
Et, nuits ! que partout la même Ame ! En est-il une
Qui n'aboie à l'exil ainsi qu'un chien perdu ?

Non, non ; pas un caillou qui ne rêve un ménage,
Pas un soir qui ne pleure : encore un aujourd'hui !
Pas un Moi qui n'écume aux barreaux de sa cage,
Et n'épluche ses jours en filaments d'ennui. . . .

Infini, d'où sors-tu ? Pourquoi nos sens superbes
Sont-ils fous d'au delà les claviers octroyés,
Croient-ils à des miroirs plus heureux que le Verbe
Et se tuent ? Infini, montre un peu tes papiers. . . .

Une place plus fraîche à l'oreiller des fièvres,
Un mirage inédit au détour du chemin,
Des rampements plus fous vers le bonheur des lèvres,
Et des opiums plus longs à rêver. Mais demain ?'

When an idealist makes too great demands on life, especially when an ardent curiosity is one of the motive forces of his existence, disillusion is the inevitable consequence. We have seen it in the other Baudelairians—we find it again in Laforgue :—

'Alors le grand bouquet tragique de la Vie !
Les mornes violets des désillusions,
Les horizons tout gris de l'ornière suivie
Et les tons infernaux de nos corruptions.'
Sanglot de la Terre. Rosace en Vitrail.

And in life he can find only repeating itself the same sad story :—

'La faim, l'amour, l'espoir . . . la maladie,
Puis la mort, c'est toujours la même comédie.'

That the idea of death should preoccupy the mind of one fated to meet it so soon is, if heartrending, only natural. Knowledge of the circumstances of his life adds poignance to these lines :—

'Je n'ai fait que souffrir, pour toute la Nature,
Pour les êtres, le vent, les fleurs, le firmament,
Souffrir par tous mes nerfs, minutieusement,
Souffrir de ne pas avoir l'âme assez pure.
J'ai craché sur l'amour et j'ai tué la chair !
Fou d'orgueil, je me suis roidi contre la vie !
Et seul, sur cette Terre à l'Instinct asservie,
Je défiais l'Instinct avec un rire amer.'

Pour le livre d'amour.

The last line brings us naturally to another side of Laforgue's character. Like Verlaine he came to the conclusion that *il ne faut pas être dupe dans ce farceur de monde.* Like Villiers de l'Isle Adam he took refuge in irony.

'Ah ! tout le long du cœur,
Un vieil ennui m'effleure.
M'est avis qu'il est l'heure
De renaître moqueur.'

Imitation de Notre Dame de la Lune VIII.

It was in this humour that he turned to write his *Moralités Légendaires*, the prose part of his work. A note from his diary gives us an insight into his aim here :—

'*Dreams of Writing.*—To write a prose which shall be very clear, very plain, though keeping all its riches, arranged not painfully but simply, French such as Christ would have spoken. And add to it pictures taken from outside our French repertory, but which remain distinctly human. Pictures like those of Gaspard Hauser, who has not studied, but who has sounded the depths of death, has made a study of natural botany, is familiar with the skies, and stars, and animals, and colours, and streets, and all good things such as cakes, tobacco, kisses, love.'

In the *Moralités Légendaires*—with the single exception of the 'Miracle des Roses'—Laforgue retold in his own manner some of the world's great stories, retold them

with his own modern dénouements, with a most entertaining use of anachronism, and throughout with his delicate elusive irony, lending modern motives to the ancient themes.

Salome becomes a sort of metaphysician, and having achieved her desire flings herself into the sea with the head of John the Baptist, who himself is but a socialistic disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Elsa is portrayed as a rebellious vestal rescued by Lohengrin who is at once wearied by her highly pronounced earthliness. Andromeda is rescued by a Perseus who seems just like a Beardsley drawing :—

'Perseus comes up sitting side-saddle, his feet with their byssus sandals coquettishly crossed; from his saddle-bow hangs a mirror. He is inert. His red smiling mouth might be compared to a cut pomegranate; a pink rose in the hollow of his chest looks like lacquer; his arms are tattooed with a heart pierced by an arrow; a lily is painted on the calf of his leg; he wears an emerald monocle, a number of rings and bracelets; from his golden shield hangs a little sword with pearl hilt.'

And Andromeda is rescued by this Perseus, who kills the monster who guarded her, only to discover that it was the monster that she loved.

Hamlet becomes a socialist disciple of Hobbes. Hear his reflections as he passes a crowd of the poor—young and old—coming back from their daily sordid tasks :—

'*Parbleu!*' thinks Hamlet, 'I know as well as you, if not better; the existing social order is scandal enough to suffocate Nature. Myself, I am nothing but a feudal parasite. Still!—they are born in it, that's an old story, it does not prevent their honeymoons nor their fear of death; and everything is good which has no end. Well then, yes! Rise up one day, then let all this be done with! Put all to fire and sword. Crush—like fleas of insomnia—castes, religions, ideas, languages! Make once more for us a fraternal childhood on this Earth our mother, which one shall go to feed upon in the warm countries.'

And what could be more characteristic than the conclusion of these reflections :—

'Dans les Jardins
De nos instincts
Allons cueillir
De quoi guérir.'

The soul of Jules Laforgue is a symbol of that longing for the unknown which is one of the characteristic features of his age. As M. Mauclair says, there was something of his beloved Hamlet in him :—

'A world of dreams in conflict with the world of facts. He has not to avenge his father, but to free his soul. Ophelia is not mad, but woman seems to him inconsistent and too limited in love to suit his great pity; and if he does not kill Polonius, at least he recks little, like that other Hamlet, that this person sees the wonders he shows him in the clouds.'

XI

LIVING POETS

We have now traced the influence of the Baudelairian spirit in France fairly near to the present day, and the question arises of where to stop. It seemed to us better not to endeavour to make a detailed study of living poets.

The work of some of the older living poets has already its definite features, while that of some of the younger is still in course of development, and we can have no certain knowledge of its final temper, since 'mankind are not pieces.'

Certain it is that the influence of Baudelaire is still at work.

The early work of Léon Cladel (1835-) shows it.

The poems of another Belgian, Emile Verhaeren (1855-) are full of Baudelairism. He has the same self-conscious deliberate disenchantment, the same highly developed sensitiveness to the surrounding universe.

> 'Un flambeau qu'on déplace, une étoffe qu'on froisse,
> Un trou qui te regarde, un craquement moqueur,
> Quelqu'un qui passe et qui revient et qui repasse
> Te feront tressaillir de frissons instinctifs ;
> Et tu te vêtiras d'une inédite audace ;
> D'autres sens te naîtront, subtils et maladifs,
> Ils renouvelleront ton être usé de rages. . . .'

Which is Poësque already, and still more so is this from 'Les Rideaux,' which also compels comparison with Baudelaire's 'Chambre Double' and much of Rodenbach :—

'Je sais de vieux et longs rideaux,
Avec des fleurs et des oiseaux,
Avec des fleurs et des jardins
Et des oiseaux incarnadins ;
De beaux rideaux si doux de joie,
Aux mornes fronts profonds
Qu'on roule en leurs baisers de soie.

Les miens, ils sont hargneux de leurs chimères,
Ils sont, mes grands rideaux, couleur de cieux,
Un firmament silencieux
De signes fous et de haines ramaires.

Mon âme est une proie
Avec du sang et de grands trous
Pour les bêtes d'or et de soie,
Mon âme, elle est béante et pantelante,
Elle n'est que loques et déchirures
Où ces bêtes, à coupables armures
D'ailes en flamme et de rostres ouverts,
Mordent leur faim par au travers. . . .'

Nor is the macabre humour wanting in Verhaeren. Here is a lusty descendant of 'The Conqueror Worm' and 'La Charogne' :—

'Mes Doigts, touchez mon front et cherchez là,
Les vers qui rongeront, un jour, de leur morsure,
Mes chairs ; touchez mon front, mes maigres doigts, voilà
Que mes veines déjà, comme une meurtrissure
Bleuâtre, étrangement, en font le tour, mes las
Et pauvres doigts—et que vos longs ongles malades
Battent, sinistrement, sur mes tempes, un glas,
Un pauvre glas, mes lents et mornes doigts !'

Mes Doigts.

He has the same ideal of aloofness, like a monk alone with his contemplation, and the other great refuge from prosaic reality—his art.

The work of Maeterlinck and his school—which to study would lead us too far into the consideration of modern mysticism—is an outcome of the Baudelairian search after the discovery of 'Correspondance,' and did not Maeterlinck himself say, 'Tout ce que j'ai, je le dois à Villiers'?

Before leaving Belgium we will mention a curious Baudelairian study by Edmond Picard (1836-) which appeared in 1893, entitled *Le Juré*. The interesting part of this 'scene from judicial life' is the preface in the form of a note on what Picard calls the *Fantastique Réel* —the fantastic being *le bizarre dans l'effrayant*, which can exist in imagination (*Imaginative Fantastique*), or in reality (*Fantastique Réel*).

Since Baudelaire no stronger plea has been made for mystery :—

'A mystery is the most profound thing for exciting human emotion. If you wish to be interesting always, never let yourself be thoroughly known. Nature herself has this skill in her works. . . . Let there remain enigma, undecipherable in some aspect and tormenting—tormenting—tormenting. . . . There is a sigh in the passage . . . the wind. There is a creaking in the woodwork. . . . I am moved. A string of the piano breaks, and vibrates in its closed case. One by one the petals fall from a rose sleeping in a vase. All this is strange. . . .'

Finally, the early work of Stuart Merrill sounds from time to time the Baudelairian note. In his piece 'Oubli' it is strong :—

OUBLI

I

'Mon cœur, ô ma Chimère, est une cathédrale
Où mes chastes pensers, idolâtres du Beau,
S'en viennent, à minuit, sous la flamme lustrale,
Râler leur requiem au pied de ton tombeau.

J'ai dressé, sous le ciel du dôme un sarcophage,
Dont la grave épitaphe, en strophes de granit,
Proclamera de l'aube à l'ombre, d'âge en âge,
L'amen et l'hosanna de notre amour bénit.

II

Mon cœur est une crypte où, parmi les pilastres,
S'enroulent les remous de l'encens des oublis,
Et vers l'heure qui luit de la lueur des astres
La paix des nuits se mire en les pavés polis.

Sur le carrare froid des marches sépulcrales,
Déjà mes vieux pensers sont pâmés de sommeil ;
Les lampadaires d'or s'endorment en spirales,
Et, ô la glauque aurore en le vitrail vermeil !'

He, too, fell under the spell of *la vieille volupté de rêver à la mort*, and of seeking a lurking sadness in nature.

'Sous le souffle étouffé des vents ensorceleurs
J'entends sourdre sous bois les sanglots et les rêves. . . .'

And in his *Refrains mélancoliques*, where his theme is *l'ineffable horreur des étés somnolents* and *l'indicible effroi des somnolents hivers*, the Baudelairian ennui once more finds expression :—

'J'ai demandé la mort aux étés somnolents,
Où les lilas au long des jardins s'alanguissent,
Et les zéphyrs, soupirs de dormeurs indolents,
Sur les fleurs de rubis et d'émeraude glissent.

Mais oh ! les revoici, les mêmes avenirs !
Les étés ont relui sur la terre ravie,
Et les vieilles amours et les vieux souvenirs
De nouveau pleins d'horreur sont venus à la vie.'

In the concluding stanzas the note is even stronger :—

'J'ai demandé la vie aux somnolents hivers,
Où les neiges aux cieux s'en vont comme des rêves. . . .

Mais j'ai vu revenir les mêmes avenirs :
Les hivers ont neigé sur le sein de la terre,
Et les vieilles amours et les vieux souvenirs,
De nouveau, fous d'effroi, sont morts dans le mystère.

Toujours vivre et mourir, revivre et remourir !
N'est-il pas de Néant final qui nous délivre ?
Mourir et vivre, ô Temps, remourir et revivre !
Jusqu'aux soleils éteints nous faudra-t-il souffrir ?'

But the temper of his poetry has changed since then. Stuart Merrill is, indeed, an example in favour of *not* including living poets in this study.

PART V

THE BAUDELAIRIAN SPIRIT IN ENGLAND

I

INTRODUCTORY

WHEN we come to study Baudelairism in England, we would call to mind that saying of Stendhal: 'Just as the sun is warmer and prudery weaker in Milan than in London, there is more passion and more gaiety in the *Café*[1] than in the *Spectator*!'

In the same way Baudelairism in England cannot be the same thing as in France; it meets with a different national temper, a different demand is made on art. As Mr. Arthur Machen has well put it:—

'In Paris it is agreed that imagination and fantasy are to work as they will and as they can, and are to be judged by their own laws. He who carves gargoyles admirably is praised for his curious excellence in the invention and execution of these grinning monsters; and if he is blamed it is for bad carving, and not because he failed to produce pet lambs; we lay stress on usefulness and serious aims, and Imagination itself is expected to improve the occasion, to reform while it entertains, and to instruct under the guise of story-telling.'

The 'heresy of the didactic' has enjoyed a longer life in England than in any other country, and even now shows no great signs of failing strength.

The modern movement whose aim is to see the world

[1] The *Café*, newspaper published by Verri in Milan.

in beauty begins in England with Shelley, and when the Baudelairian influence, or the Symbolist influence, enters into English literature it is through the influence of Shelley, hand in hand with the influence of Shelley that it works. Baudelaire himself admired Shelley; Mallarmé was professor of English.

The poetry of Shelley comes as a reaction against the introduction of the commonplace as effected by Wordsworth, though it by no means destroyed that influence, which breathes to-day in Mr. Arthur Symons' line—

'Farmyards a fluster with pigs—'

just as in that line of Arthur Hugh Clough which Richard Hutton quoted with such enthusiastic admiration in the *Spectator*, describing the dairymaid:—

'Stately with well poised pail moving on to the pump or the farmyard.'

Now, Shelley on his philosophic side reacts against this spirit as a Baudelairian *avant la lettre.*

He has the same interest in the *ideal* world. In him we find those ideas which recur at their highest expression in Villiers de l'Isle Adam: 'the universe is the creation of the mind,' 'All things exist as they are perceived,' and poetry is 'the creation of actions according to the unchangeable process of human nature as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds.'

'All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream,'

wrote Edgar Poe, and thus Shelley:—

'In this life
Of terror, ignorance and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadow of the dream.'

The idea is very old: *σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωποι*, said Pindar,

but none the less sincerely does Mallarmé declare that we are '*La triste opacité de nos spectres futurs.*'

Shelley has, too, a Baudelairian keen perception of the limits of utility :—

'Whilst the mechanist abridges and the political economist combines labour, let them beware that their speculation for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend as they have in modern England to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and of want. . . . The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer, and the vessel of the state is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism. Such are the effects which must ever flow from an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty.'

This is an argument against practical utility—against the utilitarian aim of literature ; the whole of his justification of poetry as the creator of beauty is an argument.

There is another, and less known Baudelairian side of Shelley—the side that found pleasure in cultivating weird fancies, when he and his sister-in-law in their nocturnal experiments in Italy screwed up their nerves to such a tension that they were unable to leave the room they were in, through sheer physical fear of what they might see the other side of the door.

There is something of Shelley in Poe, not only from the musical point of view.

But Shelley apart, we are able to trace in England a direct influence of Baudelaire. It is distinct in Swinburne, in Arthur O'Shaughnessy, in Oscar Wilde, in that curious figure Aubrey Beardsley, of whom we will speak when we come to consider Baudelairism in painting, and is still continuing to make itself felt in contemporary writers.

II

SWINBURNE

It is a mere commonplace to remark that Swinburne's early poetry at the time it appeared was something entirely new in English poetry.

The new feature was the carrying into perfect practice of the art-for-art theory, the preoccupation of pure sensuous beauty ; and this aim, so different from that of Swinburne's immediate predecessors, can, I think, only be accounted for by the fact that Swinburne was greatly influenced by the French poets.[1] Hugo, Gautier, Baudelaire inspired him with a great and lasting enthusiasm. The brilliant oratory of Hugo, the exquisite craftsmanship of Gautier, the strange unreal atmosphere, the 'new sins' of Baudelaire, all these left their stamp on the early genius of Swinburne. We have only to deal with his relation to the last named of these French poets.

Of his admiration for Baudelaire Swinburne left us definite and explicit proof in the 'Ave atque Vale,' written in memory of Baudelaire. It is one of the most beautiful of Swinburne's achievements, worthy to be ranked with the great elegies of our language—with Lycidas, with Adonais, with Thyrsis. We quote a stanza or two :—

> 'Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
> Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us :

[1] It is interesting to remember that Swinburne was of French descent. In a letter to Mr. E. C. Stedman, Feb. 20, 1875, he writes: 'My father, Admiral Swinburne, is the second son of Sir John Swinburne, a person whose life would be better worth writing than mine. Born and brought up in France, his father (I believe) a naturalised Frenchman (we were all Catholic and Jacobite rebels and exiles), and his mother *a lady of the house of Polignac* (a quaint political relationship for me, as you will admit), my grandfather never left France till 25 . . .' etc.

Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime ;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech ;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep ;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap. . . .

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise. . . .

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things ; none to mend
And none to mar ; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine,
And with wild notes about this dust of thine,
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell,
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

Sleep ; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks ; thou hast no more to live ;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?'

These verses alone would prove Swinburne a Baudelairian. But let us push comparison further. In the first place, Swinburne's early poetry is Baudelairian in its 'aristocracy'; like Baudelaire, Swinburne found no beauty in the commonplace, but only in the exceptional—in the unreal even. It is of course obvious that the later work (and some of that only a very little later with its socialistic preoccupation—a flagrant contradiction to the art-for-art theory) is in this totally un-Baudelairian. And the same must be said of the love poems, though it should be remarked that the fact that Swinburne is the one modern English poet who has artistically celebrated the more terrestrial aspect of love is probably due to French influence.

Un-Baudelairian again is his physical delight in Nature. No one has sung more finely the joy of contact with the sea.[1] Swinburne is like the Greeks in this who 'knew that the sea was for the swimmer and the sand for the feet of the runner.' Baudelaire, on the contrary, has all the Roman mistrust of the sea. Hear him :—

'Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer.
La mer est ton miroir ; tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,
Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.
. . . . . .
Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets :
Homme, nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes,
O mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes,
Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets !

Et cependant voilà des siècles innombrables
Que vous vous combattez sans pitié ni remord,
Tellement vous aimez le carnage et la mort,
O lutteurs éternels, ô frères implacables !'

In one passage Baudelaire does touch on another aspect :—

'La mer, la vaste mer, console nos labeurs !
Quel démon a doté la mer rauque chanteuse

[1] As James Douglas says: 'No other poet has sung it so sincerely and so spontaneously. . . . Even Byron addresses the ocean as if it were a public meeting.'

Qu'accompagne l'immense orgue des vents grondeurs,
De cette fonction sublime de berceuse ?
La mer, la vaste mer, console nos labeurs ! '

But Swinburne's physical enjoyment is entirely lacking. Yet Baudelaire was, with Swinburne, Greek, in that he, too, delighted in the contemplation of that beauty which is 'noble and nude and antique.' Here are his words :—

'J'aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,
Dont Phœbus se plaisait à dorer les statues.
. . . . . .
Nous avons, il est vrai, nations corrompues,
Aux peuples anciens des beautés inconnues :
Des visages rongés par les chancres du cœur,
Et comme qui dirait des beautés de langueur ;
Mais ces inventions de nos muses tardives
N'empêcheront jamais les races maladives
De rendre à la jeunesse un hommage profond,
—A la sainte jeunesse, à l'air simple, au doux front,
A l'œil limpide et clair ainsi qu'une eau courante,
Et qui va répandant sur tout, insouciante,
Comme l'azur du ciel, les oiseaux et les fleurs,
Ses parfums, ses chansons, et ses douces chaleurs ! '

Swinburne's idea of extracting 'exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain' (*Laus Veneris*) is a Baudelairian one, and so is the vaunted discovery of a new sin, from the same poem :—

'Yea, with red sins the faces of them shine ;
But in all these there was no sin like mine ;
No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.'

If it be urged, on the one hand, that no English poet painted in more glowing colours the attractions of vice, it should also be remembered that no poet presented with more power its consequences (which is also what Baudelaire did) :—

'Death laughs, breathing close and relentless
In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,
With a pinch in his fingers of scentless
And delicate dust.'

Indeed, the whole of 'Dolores,' as Mr. James Douglas well puts it, is a 'passionate revelation of the pain of pleasure, the ennui of evil and the satiety of sin.'

He shared with Baudelaire again that conception—common to all the nineteenth-century *thinkers*—of a universe hostile to man :—

'Men are the heart-beats of man, the plumes that feather his wings,
Storm-worn since being began with the wind and thunder of things,
Things are cruel and blind ; their strength detains and deforms :
And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up the stream of their storms.
Still, as one swimming up stream, they strike out blind in the blast
In thunders of vision and dream, and light wings of future and past.'

This is an oft-recurring note in Swinburne ; it is in the pessimism of the 'Ballad of Burdens,' it is in the famous 'Atalanta' chorus :—

'Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears ;
Grief, with a glass that ran ;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;
Summer, with flowers that fell ;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell.'

And its closing epitome of the destiny of man :—

'In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;
He weaves and is clothed with derision,
Sows, and he shall not reap ;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.'

Or again, in 'Lamentation,'

'Nor less of grief than ours
The gods wrought long ago
To bruise men one by one ;
But with the incessant hours
Fresh grief and greener woe
Spring as the sudden sun
Year after year makes flowers ;
And these die down and grow,
And the next year lacks none,'

which has a Baudelairian ring, and in it a reminiscence of Shelley :—

'As long as skies are blue and fields are green
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.'

Above all, the humour of Baudelaire's *Révolte* is to be found very strong in Swinburne. Examples abound. Take first this from the 'Hymn of Man' :—

'Thou madest man in the garden ; thou temptest man, and he fell ;
Thou gavest him poison for pardon for blood and burnt-offering to sell.
Thou hast sealed thine elect to salvation, fast locked with faith for the key,
Make now for thyself expiation, and be thine atonement for thee.
Ah, thou that darkenest heaven—ah, thou that bringest a sword,
By the crimes of thine hands unforgiven they beseech thee to hear them, O Lord. . . .

O thou hast built thee a shrine of the madness of man and his shame,
And hast hung in the midst for a sign of his worship the lamp of thy name,
Thou hast shown him for heaven in a vision a void world's shadow and shell,
And hast fed thy delight and derision with fire of belief as of hell,' etc.

Or again, in the 'Marching Song' :—

'Earth gives us thorns to tread,
And all her thorns are trod ;
Through lands burnt black and red
We pass with feet unshod,
Whence we would be man shall not keep us nor man's God.'

And again in 'Atalanta,' where Atalanta says of the gods :—

'Lo, where they heal, they help not ; thus they do,
They mock us with a little piteousness,
And we say prayers, and weep ; but at the last,
Sparing awhile they smite and spare no whit.'

And in the still more famous passage on 'The supreme evil, God' :—

'Yea with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,
One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,
And made us transitory and hazardous,
Light things and slight ;
Yet have men praised thee, saying, "He hath made men thus."

And he doeth right.
Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast laid
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,
Live : and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.
Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;
Thou hast made them bitter with the sea.
Thou hast fed one rose with the dust of many men ;
Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears ;
Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again ;
With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.
Therefore because thou art strong, our Father, and we
Feeble ; and thou art against us, and thine hand
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea,
And breaks us at the limits of the land. . . .

Because thou art over all who are over us ;
Because thy name is life, and our name death ;
Because thou art cruel, and men are piteous ;
And our hands labour, and thine hand scattereth ;
Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,
Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,
At least we witness of thee ere we die
That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;
That each man in his heart sigheth and saith,
That all men even as I,
All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over speech,
Loud words and longings are so little worth ;
And the end is hard to reach. . . .'

Examples could be multiplied ; we will only quote from 'Anactoria' :—

'For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings
The mystery of the cruelty of things? . . .
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,

And life yield up her flower to violent fate?
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death. . . .' etc.

And in 'A Reminiscence' sounds the more contemplative note of Baudelairian doubt :—

'Day to night
Calls wailing, and life to death, and depth to height,
And soul upon soul of man that hears and grieves.

Who knows, though he sees the snow-cold blossom shed,
If haply the heart that burned within the rose,
The spirit in sense, the life of life be dead?
If haply the wind that slays the storming snows
Be one with the wind that quickens? Bow thine head,
O Sorrow, and commune with thine heart—who knows?'

Relief from this restlessness could be found as Baudelaire knew by losing oneself in dreams, or in art, but above all the great calmer is Death :—

'O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
Ce pays nous ennuie, O Mort! appareillons!'

And so Swinburne :—

'Good day, good night and good morrow,
Men living and mourning say,
For thee we could only pray
That night of the day might borrow
Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow,
Death gives thee at last good day.'

And in closing we will only quote those most perfect lines of all Swinburne's poetic output :—

'From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever Gods there be—
That no life lives for ever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.'

III

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY, 1844-81

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY, as his name implies, was of Irish descent, though born in London in 1844. His life was very short, for he died at the age of thirty-six. In 1861 he entered the British Museum Library, and two years later was transferred to the Natural History department, where fishes and reptiles became his speciality. In his leisure hours he found time to write some very beautiful poems, though the fact that his work is unequal is little more than what we expect with a man carried off in the height of his promise, robbed of the opportunity of winnowing his work in his mature judgment.

There are four small volumes of O'Shaughnessy's poems—*The Epic of Women* (1870), *Lays of France* (1872), *Music and Moonlight* (1874), and the posthumous *Song of a Worker* (1881).

From the beginning these poems showed strong signs of French influence—traces of Gautier, and, above all, a debt to Baudelaire.

Swinburne of course played his part, but the point is that he played through his Baudelairian side.

The *Epic of Women* shows a Baudelairian influence in its choice of theme. Here are all the heroines of history who were great to men's cost :—

> 'From Eve—whom God made
> And left her as He made her—without soul.

And lo ! when He had held her for a season
In His own pleasure palaces above,
He gave her unto men ; this is the reason
She is so fair to see, so false to love'—

the wife of Hephaestus, Cleopatra, Salome, Helen.

When O'Shaughnessy wrote his 'To a Young Murderess' he must have had in mind those lines of Baudelaire :—

'Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté, dont tu te moques.
De ces bijoux l'Horreur n'est pas le moins charmant,
Et le Meurtre parmi tes plus chères breloques
Sur ton ventre orgueilleux danse amoureusement.'

Here is the English poem :—

'Fair yellow murderess, whose gilded head
Gleaming with deaths ; whose deadly body white
Writ o'er with secret records of the dead ;
Whose tranquil eyes, that hide the dead from sight
Down in their tenderest depth and bluest bloom ;
Whose strange unnatural grace, whose prolonged youth
Are for my death now and the shameful doom
Of all the man I might have been in truth.

Your fell smile sweetened still lest I might show
Its lingering murder with a kiss for lure
Is like the fascinating steel that one
Most vengeful in his last revenge, and sure
The victim lies beneath him, passes slow
Again and oft again before his eyes,
And over all his frame that he may know
And suffer the whole death before he dies.

Will you not slay me? Stab me, yea somehow
Deep in the heart : say some foul word at last
And let me hate you as I love you now.
Oh, would I might but see you turn and cast
That false fair beauty that you e'en shall lose,
And fall down there and writhe about my feet,
The crooked loathly viper I shall bruise
Through all eternity?—
Nay, kiss me, Sweet !'

Here too we find a strong note of exotism. Take, for instance, 'Palm-Flowers.'

'In a land of the sun's blessing
Where the passion flower grows,
My heart keeps all worth possessing,
And the way there no man knows.

All the perfumes and perfections
Of that clime have met with grace
In her body, and complexions
Of its flowers are on her face.'

And the same note recurs in the 'Song of Betrothal' in *Music and Moonlight*:—

'I think I see you under
Strange palms with leaves of gold,
Your foreign dress, and in your hand
The quaint bright fan you hold.

I sit sometimes and wonder,
O sister mine and lover,
What ship shall bring you from your land
To me here in the cold.'

And again in the 'Song of the Palm':—

'Mighty luminous and calm
Is the country of the palm,
Crowned with sunset and sunrise
Under the unbroken skies,
Waving from green zone to zone
Over wonders of its own,
Trackless, untraversed, unknown,
Changeless through the centuries.

Who shall tell enchanted stories
Of the forests that are dead?
Lo! the soul shall grow immense
Looking on strange hues intense,
Gazing at the flaunted glories
Of the hundred-coloured lories.'

There is the same effort to ascribe a reasoning to natural happenings, as in this passage from the 'Fountain of Tears' (*Epic of Women*):—

'You may feel when a falling leaf brushes
Your face, as though some one had kissed you,
Or think at least some one who missed you
Hath sent you a thought—if that cheers.

Or a bird's little song, faint and broken,
May pass for a tender word spoken ;
—Enough while around you there rushes
The life drowning torrent of tears.'[1]

And in this from *Music and Moonlight* :—

'. . . the antique Past
A minuet was dancing with the last
Still faintly blushing spectre of that eve,
Whose perfumed rose lay dying on the floor,
Some shadows seem to laugh and some to grieve
As the blue moonlight fell on them from door
And distant window.'

And here again is the Rodenbach-Baudelairian temper :—

'The houses were together quite ;
The roofs and all the window-places
Drew nigh with yearning to unite,
They were most like two lovers' faces,
Leaving just space enough for sighs
And fair love looks, and soft replies. . . .

There the dim time was very sweet,
And hours between the noon and night
Were slow to pass with lagging feet,
And wings full loaded ; tarried late,
Till long fair fingers from the deep
Dark wood came forth to separate
Leaves—lights from shades and love from sleep.

And the moon like a dreamed-of face
Seen gradually in the dark
Grew up and filled the silent place
Between those houses wan and stark.'
Lays of France : 'The Lay of the Nightingale.

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[1] Cp. Moréas, Stance vii. :—
'Par ce soir pluvieux, es-tu quelque présage,
Un secret avertissement,
O feuille, qui me viens effleurer le visage
Avec ce doux frémissement?
L'automne t'a flétrie et voici que tu tombes,
Trop lourde d'une goutte d'eau ;
Tu tombes sur mon front que courbent vers les tombes
Les jours amassés en fardeau.'

'The Disease of the Soul' is a long poem full of the Baudelairian disenchantment—the record of the disillusions resulting from the ceaseless questioning of an anxious soul :—

'There are infinite sources of tears
Down there in my infinite heart,
Where the record of time appears
As the record of time's deceiving,
Farewells and words that part
Are ever ready to start
To my lips turned white with the fears
Of my heart turned sick of believing.

I have dreamed in the red sun-setting
Among rocks where the sea comes and goes
Vast dreams of the soul's begetting
Vague oceans that break on no shore,
I have felt the eternal woes
Of the soul that aspires and knows ;
Henceforth there can be no forgetting
Or closing the eyes any more.'

And the woe that he feels he traces through the sadness of all nature :—

'I have felt the unearthly swoon
Of the sadness of the moon. . . .
I have had of the whole creation
The secret that makes it groan.

I have put my ear to the earth,
And heard in a little space
The lonely travail of birth
And the lonely prayer of the dying ;
I have looked all heaven in the face
And sought for a holier place,
And a love of my own love's worth,
And the Soul is the only replying.

I have dwelt in the tomb's drear hollow,
I have plundered and wearied death,
Till no poison is left me to swallow,
No dull sweet Lethe to have ;
I have learned all things that he saith,
I have mingled my breath with his breath,
And the phantom of life that I follow
Is weary with seeking a grave. . . .'

Pessimism of a profound nature was already present in the *Epic of Women*. Take this fragment :—

'Man shall not die. The darkness in his brain,
The canker at his heart, the ill of ages
Shall pass and leave him as a worn out pain ;
Life from her books shall tear a thousand pages,
And like an unread record shall remain
The history of his madness when he fled
Beauty the soul's bride, set before his gaze
And followed necromantic ties to wed
Death, with a lingering spousal all his days,
Gnawed on by worms as though already dead.'

O'Shaughnessy's was an intensely sensitive nature, and the sorrows of his life have left their stamp strong upon his work. He married in 1873, but the six years of his married life were full of troubles—the loss of the two children that were born to him, his continual financial difficulties, and finally, in 1879, the death of his wife ; all this accounts for the personal note of his complainings, which is far enough removed from the stoic attitude of the Baudelairian ideal. There is Baudelairian thought, however, in the following lines:—

'My life of the infinite aching,
My thought of the passionate theme,
My heart that is secretly breaking,
Far more than each lover can guess ;
With all these I but suffer or seem,
But I live in the life that I dream,
And a lover I do not possess.'

And he turns again to his exotic dreams :—

'The nostalgies of dim pasts seize me ;
There are days when the thought of some Pharaoh
Like the phantom pursues me or flees me,
Through dim lapses of life I forget
When the love of some fabulous hero,
Or the passion of purple Nero,
Is the one human love that could please me ;
The thing I dream or regret.'

This temper finally leads him to the question,

'Have I bartered my perfect gladness
For an unknown immortal sadness?
Have I counted my pleasure a crime
And wept all my beauty away?'

To which the answer is an inevitable affirmative.

With Swinburne, O'Shaughnessy too has his humour of revolt:—

'Full of care we cry
Who is this God—and those He giveth birth,
Having enkindled them with some new spark
Out of unmoulded essences, that be
In soft cores and recesses of the earth,
Or rot in realms of the limitless dark
Unwarmed and unawakened? Yea, what worth
Of love is here that we should barter sleep?
To lack love waking, and live doubtful years,
Knowing not whether most to laugh or weep,
Feeding ourselves on hoping, and our ears
Too fain with any music that deceives
With moaning voice of winds or ocean sigh,
Or sufficient lisping of the leaves?
To feel some little light and hear a cry,
And live and see no miracle and die?'

O'Shaughnessy is little known, and less read in these days. True he is not in the front rank of poets, but then his talent had no time to mature. It must be remembered that his period of literary production extended only over four years. We have had to consider his work from one point of view, and have thus been led to neglect the haunting charm of some of his lyrics.

'Then fall on us, dead leaves of our dear roses,
And ruins of Summer fall on us e'er long,
And hide us away where our dead year reposes,
Let all that we leave in the world be a song.'

And one or two of his songs 'Has summer come without the rose?' or 'Once in a hundred years,' are worthy to be classed among some of the most beautiful in our language.

IV

OSCAR WILDE, 1856-1900

AFTER renewed reading of Oscar Wilde's poems we feel that his poetry is composed of elements which are discordant with each other. At one moment the writer is inspired by a voluptuous paganism; at another a fervent spiritualism, and even a vague (oh! very vague) catholicism, breathes in the verses. This brings us at once to study this curious parallel, his faculty of feeling catholic mysticism and of finding enjoyment in pleasures, and very soon we see that this artistic sensitiveness is the man himself, that he *felt* far more intensely than most men, and was in this way led *necessarily*, as it were, to a desperate pursuit of the pleasure of existence.

And so for the non-moral critic who has not to trouble himself with questions of Oscar Wilde's conduct, this writer's work appears brimming over with life: on the one hand, pagan antiquity with its now ingenuous, now conscious sensuality delighting the man enamoured of nature; on the other, Christianity with its eternally deep mysticism.

And having said this of Oscar Wilde, have we not already suggested that he bears striking resemblances to Baudelaire and Verlaine? Like them, is he not a modern 'representative' man—for *whom Art is life itself*?

Among Oscar Wilde's aphorisms we find this saying which is so true of himself: 'If a man treats life artistically his brain is his heart.'

And from that we are naturally led to study the influence that like minds before him necessarily had upon him.

It was in Keats that Oscar Wilde saw the beginning of the artistic renaissance in England. 'It is in Keats that the artistic spirit of the century first found its absolute incarnation.'

His first published poem, the 'Ravenna,' with which he won the Newdigate prize in 1875, is full of the influence of Keats and Shelley, and the volume of poems which followed in 1878 shows the same influences. There are of course others. He had a great admiration for Rossetti, who loves beauty

> 'so well, that all the World for him
> A gorgeous-coloured vestiture must wear,
> And Sorrow take a purple diadem,
> Or else be no more Sorrow, and Despair
> Gild its own thorns, and Pain, like Adon, be
> Even in anguish beautiful;—such is the empery
> Which Painters hold, and such the heritage
> This gentle solemn Spirit doth possess,
> Being a better mirror of his age
> In all his pity, love, and weariness,
> Than those who can but copy common things,
> And leave the Soul unpainted with its mighty questionings.'
>
> *Garden of Eros.*

Swinburne too played his part. The Swinburnian note is heard from the first sonnets, with their discontent of present things, their admiration of Cromwell and Cromwell's England.

> 'This mighty empire hath but feet of clay,
> Of all its ancient chivalry and might
> Our little island is forsaken quite:
> Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,
> And from its hills that voice hath passed away
> Which spake of Freedom: O come out of it,
> Come out of it, my Soul, thou art not fit
> For this vile traffic house, where day by day

Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,
And the rude people rage with ignorant cries
Against an heritage of centuries.
It mars my calm: wherefore in dreams of Art
And loftiest culture I would stand apart
Neither for God, nor for his enemies.'

He directly celebrated Swinburne in the *Garden of Eros*, as the one poet worthy to carry on the tradition of Keats —with whose advent

'Venus laughs to know one knee will bow before her still.
. . . . . .
And he hath kissed the lips of Proserpine,
And sung the Galilæan's requiem,
That wounded forehead dashed with blood and wine
He hath discrowned, the Ancient Gods in him
Have found their last, most ardent worshipper,
And the new Sign grows grey and dim before its conqueror.'

Wilde's admiration for Morris sometimes held dangers —the Rossetti-Morris refrain habit needs very cautious handling, else it trips over the boundary of burlesque, and irresistibly recalls Calverley. Here is a highly Morrisonian 'Chanson':—

'A ring of gold and a milk-white dove
  Are goodly gifts for thee,
And a hempen rope for your own love
  To hang upon a tree.

For you a House of Ivory
  (Roses are white in the rose bower!)
A narrow bed for me to lie
  (White, O white is the hemlock flower!)

Myrtle and jessamine for you
  (O the red rose is fair to see!)
For me the cypress and the rue
  (Finest of all is rosemary!)

For you three lovers of your hand
  (Green grass where a man lies dead!)
For me three paces on the sand
  (Plant lilies at my head!)'

Such then are the influences at once discernible in Wilde's earliest work. Swinburne was already a Baude-

lairian influence. When we look further we find the same Baudelairian distrust of the idea of progress; it is present in his discontent with his age, of which we have already spoken, and it recurs in his revolt against the reigning 'critical' unromantic prevailing spirit.

'Already the still lark is out of sight,
Flooding with waves of song this silent dell—
Ah! there is something more in that bird's flight
Than could be tested in a crucible.'

He had also all the Baudelairian hatred of democracy, the exasperation against those demagogues who confound the arrival of democracy with the arrival of the Golden Age, against the so-called children of liberty

'. . . . whose dull eyes
See nothing save their own unlovely woe.'

As he says of himself:—

'Albeit nurtured in democracy
And liking best that state republican
Where every man is Kinglike, and no man
Is crowned above his fellows, yet I see,
Spite of this modern fret for Liberty,
Better the rule of One, whom all obey
Than to let clamorous demagogues betray
Our freedom with the kiss of anarchy . . .'

The descendant of Baudelaire—the man of sensation—shows himself in the importance attached to feelings:—

'. . . to feel is better than to know,
And wisdom is a childless heritage,
One pulse of passion—youth's first fiery glow—
Are worth the hoarded proverbs of the sage:
Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy,
Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love, and eyes to see!'

Baudelairian again in its artificiality is his charming 'Le Panneau':—

'Under the rose-tree's dancing shade
There stands a little ivory girl,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,
  The white leaves flutter one by one,
  Down to a blue bowl where the sun,
Like a great dragon writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,
  The red leaves flutter idly down,
  Some fall upon her yellow gown,
And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,
  And as she sings a silver crane
  Begins his scarlet neck to strain,
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,
  And from the thicket where he lies
  Her lover, with his almond eyes,
Watches her movements in delight.'

The whole of the *Sphinx*, which, together with the *Harlot's House*, is Wilde's finest poetic achievement, is Baudelairian in its exotic mysterious inspiration, its technical perfection, the haunting effect of the internal rhymes. Pure Baudelaire are such lines as these :—

'Your eyes are like fantastic moons that shiver in some stagnant lake,
Your tongue is like a scarlet snake that dances to fantastic tunes,
Your pulse makes poisonous melodies, and your black throat is like the hole
Left by some torch or burning coal on Saracenic tapestries.'

The concluding lines of this poem are in the pessimistic temper we had come to expect :—

'False Sphinx! False Sphinx! By reedy Styx old Charon, leaning on his oar,
Waits for my coin. Go thou before, and leave me to my crucifix,
Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches the world with wearied eyes,
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps for every soul in vain.'

Finally, those lines of Baudelaire in the *Héautontimorouménos*,

'Je suis la plaie et le couteau
Je suis le soufflet et la joue . . .'

directly inspired Wilde's

'Being ourselves the sowers and the seeds,
The night that covers and the lights that fade,
The spear that pierces and the side that bleeds,
The lips betraying and the life betrayed.'

These Baudelairian features that we find in the poems meet us again in the prose works, that is, in their critical side. Here again it should be borne in mind what a brilliant critic was Baudelaire; indeed, Baudelaire may be considered the father of creative criticism, domain in which Swinburne is his descendant, and wherein Pater even surpassed him. We know how much Wilde owed to Pater—our interest lies in seeking the Baudelairian ideas in the result.

We find them most clearly set out in his *Intentions*, that volume of criticisms which first appeared in 1891, and which contains Wilde's best work.

The first doctrine we should expect to find put forward is that of *l'art pour l'art*: and it is so. Surely no man ever professed such horror of the utilitarian as Wilde. Early in the *Decay of Lying* we read:—

'As long as a thing is useful or necessary to us, or affects us in any way, either for pain or pleasure, or appeals strongly to our sympathies, or is a vital part of the environment in which we live, it *is outside the proper sphere of art.*'

And he proceeds to condemn the novels with a purpose of Charles Reade, of Dickens.

As he had said already in his *Rise of Historical Criticism*:—

'To set before either the painter or the historian the inculcation of moral lessons, as an aim to be consciously pursued, is to miss entirely the true motive and characteristic of both art and history, which is, in the one case the creation of beauty, in the other the discovery of the laws of the evolution of progress: *Il ne faut demander de l'Art que l'Art, du passé que le passé.*'

Wilde had set out as a disciple of Keats, follower of the spirit of Beauty whose ultimate doctrine is

'Beauty is Truth, and Truth Beauty';

but the first step of your true Baudelairian is towards proving that the second part of the premise does not hold. Even so Wilde, like Baudelaire, declares himself no partisan of Nature:—

'The popular cry of our time is "Let us return to Life and Nature!" . . . But alas! we are mistaken in our well-meaning efforts. Nature is always behind the age. And as for Life, she is the solvent that breaks up Art, the enemy that lays waste her house. . . . One touch of Nature may make the whole world kin, but two touches of Nature will destroy any work of Art.'

'The best one can say of modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality.'

'Those who do not love Plato more than Truth never know the inmost shrine of Art.'

The duty of the artist is to make choice, and where necessary to improve upon reality. And in this way he must exercise restraint. This is the great lesson for the purely personal poet, a lesson which might be studied with advantage by Verlaine, and above all by Wordsworth. Hallward in *Dorian Gray* is made to carry this doctrine to its furthest point: 'An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them.'

André Gide records how Wilde used to lay down as a principle to him: 'In art there is no first person.'

In the same way Daudet's characters lost their charm for him once proved to be taken from life.

For after all, can we lay down what is Truth? Here is Oscar Wilde's answer to the question:—

'In matters of religion, it is simply the opinion that has survived. In matters of science, it is the ultimate sensation. In matters of art, it is one's last mood.'

Wilde held the Baudelairian-Hegelian theory of the universe as a creation of our mind, and thus he is led to say, 'Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life.'

Just as Stevenson pointed out that though we admire a great picture, what is truly admirable is the appreciativeness of our mind, Wilde, taken with the fancy, has developed it in one of his brilliantly paradoxical paragraphs, proving fogs an invention of Whistler, and sunsets out of date since the day of Turner.

Baudelaire considered that the poet inevitably produces the critic, and this doctrine goes hand in hand with his continual assertion of the self-consciousness of art. Wilde holds the same view.

'Believe me, there is no fine art without self-consciousness, and self-consciousness and the critical spirit are one';

and a little further we read:—

'Each new school as it appears cries out against criticism, but it is to the critical faculty in man that it owes its origin. The mere creative instinct does not innovate, but reproduces.'

The artist must set out with the clear idea of what he intends to create, otherwise the effect cannot but be vague, and 'To the æsthetic temperament the vague is always repellent.'

The *vague*, and not the mysterious, as Mr. Symons was careful to point out.

Mystery, on the contrary, is one of the elements of beauty — true Baudelairian formula. The artist must look upon art as a 'goddess whose mystery it is his province to intensify, and whose majesty his privilege to make more marvellous in the eyes of men.'

Or, as he puts it in *Dorian Gray*: 'It is the uncertainty that charms one. A mist makes things wonderful.'

And from this it follows that Art must be suggestive,

or, as Moréas put it, must never go quite so far as the *conception de l'idée en soi.*

'It is through its very incompleteness that Art becomes complete in beauty, and so addresses itself not to the faculty of recognition nor to the faculty of reason, but to the æsthetic sense alone, which, while accepting both reason and recognition as stages of apprehension, subordinates them both to a pure synthetic expression of the work of Art as a whole, and, taking whatever alien emotional elements the work may possess, uses their very complexity as a means by which a richer unity may be added to the ultimate impression itself.'

So much then for the resemblance of purely critical ideas. There is also in Wilde some of the spirit of fear that haunts Poe and Baudelaire; he too has been haunted by grotesque fancies, and troubled by the 'malady of reverie,' when

'gradually white fingers creep through the curtains, and they appear to tremble. In black fantastic shapes, dumb shadows crawl into the corners of the room, and crouch there. Outside, there is the stirring of birds among the leaves, or the sound of men going forth to their work, or the sigh and sob of the wind coming down from the hills, and wandering round the silent house, as though it feared to wake the sleepers, and yet must needs call forth sleep from her purple cave. Veil after veil of thin dusky gauze is lifted, and by degrees the forms and colours of things are restored to them, and we watch the dawn remaking the world in its antique pattern: out of the unreal shadows of the night comes back the real life that we had known. We have to resume it where we had left off, and there steals over us a terrible sense of the necessity for the continuance of energy in the same wearisome round of stereotyped habits, or a wild longing, it may be, that our eyelids might open some morning upon a world that had been refashioned anew in the darkness for our pleasure, a world in which things would have fresh shapes and colours, and be changed or have other secrets, a world in which the past would have little or no place, or survive at any rate, in no conscious form of obligation or regret, the remembrance even of joy having its bitterness, and the memories of pleasure their pain.'

It is in the power of creating these worlds that *Dorian Gray* is essentially Baudelairian, in his ceaseless pursuit of sensation.

Fear of consequences is ethically the lowest reason for not sinning—nor had Dorian Gray any of this fear. He considered that

'. . . the true nature of the senses had never been understood, and that they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic. As he looked back upon man moving through History, he was haunted by a feeling of loss. So much had been surrendered! and to such little purpose!'

In the descriptions of the various modes of pursuit of sensation in the eleventh chapter of *Dorian Gray*—though the starting-point be from Baudelaire, there is also very much Huysmans. We are minded at every turn of des Esseintes; there is the same interest in the Catholic ritual, in mysticism, in perfumes. There is the same searching for correspondences in the interpretation of that music, the same interest in the gorgeous pomps of life in the past, the same intimate acquaintance with its wealth of detail. (The same thing was already apparent in the passage where he describes Wainwright's luxurious tastes—*Pen, Pencil and Poison.*) Certainly if Huysmans had never written, Dorian Gray would have been very different, even had he existed.

And is not Salome entirely inspired by those pages in *A Rebours*, which contain Huysmans' interpretative criticism of Moreau's Salome paintings.

The resemblance to Verlaine is very strong in the celebrations of suffering. The beauty of the revelation of suffering occurred to both in prison.

'There are times when sorrow seems to me the only truth. Other things may be illusions of the eye, of the appetite, made to

blind the one and cloy the other, but out of sorrow have the worlds been built, and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain.

In fact, it is this theme that is the prevailing one throughout *De Profundis*.

Finally, Wilde's style in his *Poems in Prose*, his *Happy Prince*, and *House of Pomegranates*, aims at a Baudelairian ideal, the

'. . . miracle of a poetical prose, musical, rhythmless, rhymeless, both supple enough and abrupt enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of the soul, to the modulations of reverie, to the startings-up of conscience.'

Wilde did frequently produce a prose which is a very beautiful instrument: certain passages from *De Profundis*, or from, let us say, *The Fisherman and his Soul*, are among the finest in our language.

Dorian Gray too reminds us of Baudelaire's Samuel Cramer in *La Fanfarlo*, who was all the artists he had ever studied, and all the books he had read.

'There were times when it appeared to Dorian Gray that the whole of history was merely the record of his own life, not as he had lived in it in act and circumstance, but as his imagination had created it for him, as it had been in his brain and in his passions. He felt that he had known them all, those strange terrible figures that had passed across the stage of the world and made sin so marvellous, and evil so full of subtlety. It seemed to him that in some mysterious way their lives had been his own.'

We have already remarked on the fact that the Baudelairian movement leads into mysticism. Oscar Wilde felt the same thing. In *De Profundis* he tells us :—

'I am conscious now that behind all this beauty, satisfying though it may be, there is some spirit hidden of which the painted forms and shapes are but modes of manifestation, and it is with this Spirit that I desire to become in harmony. I have grown tired of the articulate utterances of men and things. The Mystical in Art, the Mystical in Life, the Mystical in Nature—this is what I am looking for.'

There is also a good deal of Baudelaire's delight in mystification, or that of the Baudelairians in general in the power to *épater le bourgeois*, in Oscar Wilde's connection with that æsthetic movement which has been so admirably recorded for us by Du Maurier and W. S. Gilbert.

Laforgue said of Baudelaire that he was the first to break with the public. Oscar Wilde, who had doubtless read Laforgue, rejoiced in—what his enemies call his pose—of despising what most men respect.

He wrote :—

'Morality is the attitude we adopt towards people we cannot endure.'

'To be as artificial as possible is the first duty in life. What the second is, no one yet knows.'

Far more circumspect than Baudelaire, far more man of the world than Verlaine, he saw what an excellent puff —as regards the general English public or University students—lay in his (to say the least of it) eccentric attitude. For who in England knew Baudelaire and Verlaine towards 1890? A few men of letters certainly, but a few only. Oscar Wilde certainly saw the advantage to be gained from this ignorance on the part of the English public.

Not that we wish to depreciate him ; but when we come to study his curious, complicated nature we are glad to discover a thread in the skein.

V

CONTEMPORARY WRITERS

In England as in France the Baudelairian spirit has not yet ceased working. We have already referred to the difficulty of discussing a movement on the part of living writers, and will, as before, content ourselves with little more than mention.

In the first place, then, the Baudelairian spirit is making itself felt in the modern Irish literary movement. It is in the symbolism of Yeats, it was in the suggestiveness of Synge (and the fact that these two, dramatically, owe something to Maeterlinck is no hindrance to our theory), it is in the dreamy mysticism of A. E., and in that of R. H. Benson and of Mr Arthur Machen.

Mr. Arthur Symons is a Baudelairian as critic rather than as poet. It was a Baudelairian who said, 'To understand is to create.' As critic he has shown himself in thorough sympathy with the Baudelairian movement; he has its melancholy love of sadness ('Only very young people want to be happy'), and there is a Baudelairian confession in the 'Amends to Nature.'

> 'I have loved colours and not flowers,
> Their motion, not the swallow's wings;
> And wasted more than half my hours
> Without the comradeship of things.'

From time to time in his poems the Baudelairian influence is discernible. In 'Images of Good and Evil' it is marked; but, on the whole the poems are not the more important portion of Mr. Symons' work.

His *Spiritual Adventures*, with their seeking to investigate 'the other things,' have something Baudelairian in them, and from time to time recall Huysmans.

But at the present time there are above all two very interesting writers who owe so much to the Baudelairian spirit that we shall allow ourselves to study them in more detail. We mean Mr Arthur Machen and Mr. George Moore.

Arthur Machen

Mr. Arthur Machen is indeed one of the most Baudelairian of contemporary writers.

In his works we again meet the distrust of nature from the documentary point of view—the denunciation of 'Romans à Clef,' leading up to this declaration :—

'It comes to this again and again that Art and Life are two different spheres, and that the Artist with a capital A is not a clever photographer who understands selection to a greater or less degree.'

There is the same importance given to ecstasy 'which is the withdrawal, the standing apart from common life,' and this 'standing apart' naturally leads him to seek 'the other things,' which are to be found

'sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the scent of a flower, sometimes in the whirl of a London street, sometimes hidden under a great lonely hill. Some of us seek them with most hope in the sacring of the Mass, others receive tidings in the sound of music, in the colour of a picture, in the shining form of a statue, and in the meditation of eternal truth.'

His latest work *The Hill of Dreams* is full of Baudelairism. Here is a description of a scene in the woods as his hero Lucian feels it :—

'Slowly and timidly he began to untie his boots, fumbling with the laces, and glancing all the while on every side at the ugly misshapen trees that hedged the lawn. Not a branch was straight, not

one was free, but all were interlaced and grew one about another; and just above ground, where the cankered stems joined the protuberant roots, there were forms that imitated the human shape, and faces and twining limbs that amazed him. Green mosses were hair, and tresses were stark in grey lichen; a twisted root swelled into a limb; in the hollows of the rooted bark he saw the masks of men. . . . As he gazed across the turf and into the thicket, the sunshine seemed really to become green, and the contrast between the bright glow poured on the lawn, and the black shadow of the brake made an odd flickering light, in which all the grotesque postures of stem and root began to stir; the wood was alive. The turf beneath him heaved and sunk as with the deep swell of the sea. . . .'

This Lucian is a descendant of Baudelaire in his interest in perfumes. Here is an interesting passage:—

'The sun still beat upon the roses, and a little breeze bore the scent of them to his nostrils together with the smell of grapes and vine leaves. He had become curious in sensation, and as he leant back upon the cushions covered with glistening yellow silk he was trying to analyse a strange ingredient in the perfume of the air. He had penetrated far beyond the crude distinctions of modern times, beyond the rough: "there 's a smell of roses," "there must be sweet-briar somewhere." Modern perceptions of odour were, he knew, far below those of the savage in delicacy. The degraded black fellow of Australia could distinguish odours in a way that made the consumer of "damper" stare in amazement, but the savage's sensations were all strictly utilitarian. To Lucian, as he sat in the cool porch, his feet on the marble, the air came laden with scents, as subtly and wonderfully interwoven and contrasted as the harmonies of a great master. The stained marble of the pavement gave a cool reminiscence of the Italian mountain, the blood-red roses sent out an odour mystical as passion itself, and there was the hint of inebriation in the perfume of the trellised vines. . . .'

And again:—

'He could imagine a man who was able to live on one sense while he pleased; to whom, for example, every impression of touch, taste, hearing, or seeing should be translated into odour; who, at the desired kiss should be ravished with the scent of dark violets, to whom music should be the perfume of a rose-garden at dawn.'

The problem of the boundary line between the various senses, and the possibility of their merging had attracted him :—

'The fancy that sensations are symbols and not realities hovered in his mind, and led him to speculate as to whether they could not actually be transmitted one into another. It was impossible, he thought, that a whole continent of knowledge had been undiscovered; the energies of men having been expended in unimportant and foolish directions. Modern ingenuity had been employed on such trifles as locomotive engines, electric cables, and cantilever bridges; on elaborate devices for bringing uninteresting people nearer together; the ancients had been almost as foolish, because they had mistaken the symbol for the thing signified. It was not the material banquet which really mattered but the thought of it; it was almost as futile to eat, and take emetics, and eat again, as to invent telephones and high-pressure boilers. As for some other ancient methods of enjoying life, one might as well set oneself to improve calico printing at once.'

The importance ascribed to sensation comes out again in his remarks on language :—

'Language, he understood, was chiefly important for the beauty of its sounds, by its possession of words resonant, glorious to the ear, by its capacity, when exquisitely arranged, of suggesting wonderful and indefinable impressions, perhaps more ravishing and further removed from the domain of strict thought than the impressions excited by music itself. Here lay hidden the secret of the sensuous art of literature; it was the secret of suggestion, the art of causing delicious sensation by the use of words.'

Finally, Mr. Machen is Baudelairian in his Catholicism —which for him, as for Barbey d'Aurevilly, is the root of all things. For him without an, at the least, subconscious acceptance of Catholic dogma there is no literature :—

'Don't imagine that you can improve your literary chances by subscribing the Catechism of The Decrees of the Council of Trent. No; I can give you no such short and easy plan for excelling; but I tell you that unless you have assimilated the final dogmas—the

eternal truths—upon which those things rest, consciously if you please, but subconsciously of necessity, you can never write literature, however clever and amusing you may be. Think of it, and you will see that, from the literary standpoint, Catholic dogma is merely the witness, under a special symbolism of the enduring facts of human nature and the universe; it is merely the voice which tells us distinctly that man is *not* the creature of the drawing-room and the Stock Exchange, but a lonely awful soul confronted by the Source of all Souls, and you will realise that to make literature it is necessary to be, at all events, subconsciously Catholic.'

George Moore

'There was a certain king of Bo—he——.

'As the corporal was entering the confines of Bohemia, my uncle Toby obliged him to halt for a certain moment.'

And in the end, in spite of more than one attempt on the good corporal's part to continue his story, we never know any more about it.

Readers of the *Confessions of a Young Man* wonder whether this may not be the king of Bohemia anticipated by Corporal Trim. For if ever there were a true king of Bohemia, it was George Moore, one of the princes of New Athens, the literary tavern frequented by Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Catulle Mendès, Dégas and Manet.

Mr. George Moore was, and still is, what the Parisian *milieu* where he spent the most decisive years of his youth made him.

Somewhere in the *Confessions* he writes:—

'How to be happy! not to read Baudelaire and Verlaine, not to enter the Nouvelle Athènes, unless perhaps to play dominoes like the bourgeois over there, not to do anything that would awake too intense consciousness of life! . . .'

But with him such words only serve to further vivify the feeling of life which he would exasperate. The true Moore, the one who knows himself, is the one who writes:—

'I am a sensualist in literature; I may see perfectly well that this or that book is a work of genius, but if it doesn't "fetch me" it doesn't concern me, and I forget its very existence. What leaves me cold to-day will madden me to-morrow. With me literature is a question of sense, intellectual sense, if you will, but sense all the same, and ruled by the same caprices, those of the flesh!'

One cannot wish for a deeper confession. A few pages further on he adds:—

'Oh for excess, for crime! I would give many lives to save one sonnet by Baudelaire; for the hymn '*A la très-chère, à la très-belle, qui remplit mon cœur de clarté*' let the firstborn in every house in Europe be slain; and in all sincerity I profess my readiness to decapitate all the Japanese in Japan and elsewhere to save from destruction one drawing by Hokusai.'

What could be more Baudelairian?

'I did not go to either Oxford or Cambridge,' writes Mr. Moore. We should perhaps congratulate him upon this, did he not congratulate himself so much. It is quite clear that through making a very mediocre study of his humanities he gained by the discovery of certain things discovered long before Homer. Mr. Moore is at bottom a primitive, an Irish primitive with the highly-strung nerves of a *petite maîtresse*, the spirit of his race rendered keen by his commerce with Parisians, and above all the gift of seeing the comic side of things.

In his acute perception of the grotesque he reminds us above all of J. K. Huysmans; and indeed no French writer had more influence upon him than Huysmans—the most personal writer of the later nineteenth century. Not only does his masterpiece, *Evelyn Innes*, with its study of mysticism in the soul of a great artist recall the author of *En Route* on every page, but we find continually the same artistic method, the love of detail for detail's sake, and a minute analysis, as it were, of facts in themselves minute.

Evelyn Innes might be described as a book written

round music with erotic intermezzi. The heroine herself is a Huysmans in petticoats.

One understands well how *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* were written, partly under the influence of the French writer who furnished the artistic mould, and partly with the writer's own experiences (therein again following the Huysmans formula).

The author of *En Route* passes from naturalism to mysticism ; it is disgust that purifies his soul and cleanses it from all stain. In the same way, Evelyn Innes 'deceiving Owen, deceiving her father, deceiving Ulick, deceiving Monsignor' (p. 329) feels so wearied that she thinks of killing herself, but instead becomes 'Sister Teresa.' The extreme sensitiveness which constitutes the whole character of Evelyn Innes must fatally have brought her to that.

The great difference between Huysmans and George Moore lies in this, that the French writer is sincere in his conversion. He wants to be a better, a more deserving man. Too long was he busied with work in which he did not believe. Such a state must come to an end. To live as . . . we all live, seems miserable to him. Not so with George Moore.

With Evelyn Innes it is true that there is a feeling of the impurity of her life, but that is all. 'It was her sins of the flesh that she wanted to confess, and this argument about the Incarnation had begun to seem out of place. Suddenly it seemed to her *inexpressibly ludicrous* that she should be kneeling beside the priest' (p. 395). Is not this verily George Moore? George Moore, the ironist? Far indeed are we from Huysmans after his confession.

We have not space to attempt to analyse those two long novels *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa*. The future will know if they are masterpieces. They will last if they are *true*. As M. Paul Bourget has said, 'All the magic

of a talent for writing is powerless to preserve a work which is not above all and before all a testimony of truth. The Chateaubriand of the *Génie du Christianisme*, of the *Martyrs*, of *Atala* even, and of *René*, would be but a magnificent name if there were not also the Chateaubriand of the *Mémoires d'outre-Tombe*, the painter of Combourg.' It was doubtless from his Flemish forefathers that Huysmans inherited this gift of representing the caricatural aspect of man and things. George Moore, who from his youth detested Ireland and her religion ('two dominant notes in my character, an original hatred of my native country, and a brutal loathing of the religion I was brought up in'—*Confessions of a Young Man*, chap. ix), was already prepared to see the ridiculous side of things.

Under the influence of his Parisian surroundings this taste for the ugly developed. We should have liked to read a still more detailed analysis of his Parisian entourage. Had he led in those days a somewhat more spiritual life he would have discerned in all these decadents, these mandarins of the Nouvelle Athènes and elsewhere, a complacent pride at the sight of the platitude of humanity's raillery, what a seventeenth-century preacher might have called the concupiscence of degradation.

Possibly at this time Huysmans had not the great influence upon Moore that he most certainly had later on. Mr. Moore speaks continually of his admiration for Balzac, herein showing his taste and his excellent critical sense. But once back in England he must have been clearly attracted by that incontestable affinity existing between Huysmans and himself.

Mr. George Moore is a terrible railer. He is what the French call *narquois*. Lately, he has returned to a manner which, in 1888, seemed premature: that of the *Confessions*. He describes for us the Irish literary move-

ment of the last fifteen years, in which he has been one of the principal actors.

Madame de Boigne of the famous memoirs used to say: 'Do you want to know why Chateaubriand is greater than Jean Jacques Rousseau? Because Chateaubriand always felt, even in his youth, that he would one day write his memoirs. He walked through life with this *arrière-pensée*. That was his conscience.' And doubtless Mr. Moore has gone through life with the same purpose. But certainly this has not been his *conscience*.

As he writes his recollections, he has none of that thirst for humiliation which a penitent may feel, but far rather the aim of satisfying his innate desire to humiliate others. His latest volume is a portfolio of cruel caricatures. He brings us to a certain banquet in Dublin, where the *apostles* of the movement are very charmingly dressed. Good honest Irishmen become really grotesque under his caricatural brush.

He is very Baudelairian in this sense that, though ceaselessly incredulous, he pretends to believe in this movement of Irish faith. This is a terribly deep epicurism. Of the enthusiastic ardour of the Dublin circle he has kept just enough to cook us a very spicy, very highly flavoured dish.

This caricaturist talent which cannot stop ridiculing everything has developed with time, to become almost the main attraction of his last volume *Ave*, and his articles 'In Search of Divinity.' It has been his fortune to know Yeats and A. E.—those two great poets. How does the author of *Lake Isle of Innisfree*, or the *Countess Kathleen*, or the *Wind among the Reeds*, figure under his incisive pen? As a sort of crow with a 'melancholy caw.' That is the picture which always remains in the reader's mind.

Though he is far more respectful towards George Russell—can any one imagine a more extraordinary

journey than that descent with A. E. into the tumuli of ancient Ireland? Really one regrets that the writer should have put the author of *Homeward Songs by the Way* into a posture which has a touch of the ridiculous, while he is supposed to be invoking the gods of Erin's antiquity.

We do not doubt of the truth of the episode, but surely there was another way of looking at it, and the whole incident might have become sublime had Mr. Moore been truly touched. To borrow a sentence from the *Confessions of a Young Man*, 'we wonder if it is only une blague qu'on nous a faite.'

ALFRED DOUGLAS

'In the salt terror of a stormy sea
There are high altitudes the mind forgets;
And undesired days are hunting nets
To snare the souls that fly Eternity.
But we being gods will never bow the knee,
Though sad moons shadow every sun that sets,
And tears of sorrow be like rivulets
To feed the shallows of Humility.
Within my soul are some mean gardens found
Where drooped flowers are, and unsung melodies,
And all companioning of piteous things.
But in the midst is one high terrace ground,
Where level lawns sweep through the stately trees
And the great peacocks walk like painted kings.'

City of the Soul.

Is not this very beautiful sonnet a confession from Lord Alfred Douglas of his Baudelairian readings—another setting of the Samain refrain 'Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade.' To make, thanks to ingenious images, a verse projection of one's secret soul was the delight of Lord Alfred Douglas, following in his master's footsteps. When he writes,

'Or if fate cries and grudging gods demur,
To clutch Life's hair, and thrust one naked phrase
Like a lean knife between the ribs of Time,'

we see what it is that he pursues; it is the coloured picture which will serve to translate what he has been feeling, and let us hasten to say that he finds most admirable metaphors which are indeed the exact and subtle expression of his sentiment.

The fact that Lord Alfred Douglas was received into the Catholic Church in May 1911 far from astonishing confirms us in the opinion that he is a true symbolist. For from dawn of day till nightfall, at every hour marked by liturgical prayer the Catholic lives in a world of symbols. Not only the biblical images, the evangelical parables, but the ceremonial of the cult, the very form of the churches, everything down to the priest's vestments speaks by means of symbols.

Having boarded Baudelaire's boat he floated down the river of ennui, whence he saw

> 'The earth a vision of affright,
> And men a sordid crowd,
> And felt the fears, and drank the bitter tears,
> And saw the empty houses of Delight.'

Baudelaire's influence is felt in such poems of the *City of the Soul* as 'The Sphinx,' 'Autumn Days,' 'To Sleep,' and there are also in this volume two beautiful translations from Baudelaire, 'Le Balcon,' and 'Harmonie du Soir.' In that wonderful slender volume of sonnets which appeared in 1909, not the least beautiful are the two translations from Baudelaire: *comprendre c'est égaler*, and the converse is also true.

Richard Middleton

There is a certain bronze, one of the most exquisite of antiquity's legacies, a statue of Dionysos. With upraised finger the god is listening, and begs of you to listen, to the world's mysterious music. When you see it you begin to walk on tiptoe.

In the same way, the poetry of Middleton in expressing

the distress of this our age of doubts and desires, leads us to discover the sacred beauty of the Invisible around us.

> 'Belovéd, can you hear? They sing
> Words that no mortal lips can sound. . . .'

The two volumes of Middleton's works which we possess are tremulous with the thought of Death, the inevitable,

> 'For Death is upon the skies
> And upon us all—'

with the thought that we are but dreams, and that the best way with life is to remain for ever a child, or at least to treasure the remembrance of our childhood. 'Our moments are the ghosts of old moments.'

His book of short stories guides us step by step through the corridors of Memory's house; we remember being children among children, we remember being ill and the pleasures attendant upon our illness. With the exception of *The Ghost Ship* each story is one of Memory's unused chambers, come to life again because real, living children have passed through it: little Edward, who is after all 'no very wonderful little boy'; or Jack, the postmaster's son, consoling himself for his father's imprisonment: 'Never mind, mother, we'll help him to escape'; or the shepherd's boy, a hero he; or again the Children of the Moon.

Middleton's sentences are woven by tender fairy hands —I mean, mothers' or old nurses'—to tuck up these fleeting little beings in the gossamer of his words.

You are made to think of one of Baudelaire's beautiful prose-poems, *Désespoir de la Vieille*, and you ask yourself: Is not Middleton just what Baudelaire held imprisoned in his heart? Is he not that mysterious something that was ever striving to gush forth from Baudelaire's heart, but never could?

There is no doubt that Middleton knew his Baudelaire.

It is enough to compare *On the Brighton Road*, *Children of the Moon*, *Blue Blood*, with the prose-poems *Le Ver et le Cimetière*, *Déjà*, *les Vocations*, to see to what a pitch the English writer was impregnated with the French one. 'Something conscious of the intolerable evil called life' animates both of them. Both were men who did nothing but dream and gaze out of the window, (*A Wet Day*, *les Fenêtres*).

Mr. Henry Savage saw that Middleton, 'Dionysian of spirit and broken, invites comparison with Wilde,' *a fortiori* with Baudelaire.

Barbey d'Aurevilly wrote to Baudelaire that the only thing for the latter to do was either to become a Christian . . . or blow his brains out. Richard Middleton died by his own hand.

And here we must leave the consideration of the Baudelairian spirit in literature. The influence continues to make itself felt—sometimes clearly and definitely, sometimes combining with other influences and working more darkly, but always in such a way as to justify our placing of Baudelaire among those men but for whom in some way, great or small, literature had been other than it is.

PART VI

THE BAUDELAIRIAN SPIRIT IN PAINTING

I

In order to understand the pictures of a school of painting, or even the work of a great master, it is necessary to know the moral atmosphere in which he lived, or thanks to which the painter and his disciples have created their masterpieces.

Painting is the representation of nature and of life by means of drawing and colour, but it is necessarily neither the *whole* of nature nor the *whole* of life. Who says art, says choice, and it is obvious that one age will make a choice which another will merely ridicule.

Thus the old Italian masters sought their inspiration in the Scriptures, while the great seventeenth-century Dutch school desired only to paint scenes of private life or certain features of national landscape.

Charles Lebrun, who guides the course of the seventeenth-century art in France, draws his inspiration from sacred and mythological subjects, despising those of contemporary life.

Then Watteau, and after him Lancret, Pater, Boucher, Fragonard, Troy, Charles Coypel, Van Loo, are the artists of the Surprises, Joys, and Sorrows of Love.

David and his school, forcing themselves to imitate a kind of pseudo-antiquity, turn to Roman (or Napoleonic) history.

We see, then, that painting which represents life is as varied as life itself. And thus it is not surprising that from time to time an artist should be born who is no longer content with painting material objects, but who

aims at painting ideas. After all, ideas are a part of life, since it is thought that orders life. Now, if it be possible to find clear traces of the influence of literature on painting, it is in the study of this class of artists that we must seek them.

In the seventeenth century in France, Nicolas Poussin is assuredly the representative of cartesianism in painting. When he says, speaking of colours, 'Nos appétits n'en doivent pas juger seulement, mais aussi la raison,' he is a true disciple of Boileau with his dictum, 'Suivez donc la raison. . . .'

Therefore he is not content with putting in his landscapes a man who passes on his way, or a woman carrying fruit to market. He generally places therein thinking figures to awaken our thought; men who are influenced by passion, in order to awaken our passions.[1]

In the same way—without seeking further afield—the English painter Watts with his mythical art explains the cry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, that Art is the interpreter of the holy things which happen beyond the veil.

Now, between 1824 and 1860 there was working a very great painter, quite different from Poussin as regards drawing, and yet like him in that he too believed that 'inventer dans un art, c'est penser et sentir dans cet art.'

It will be in such a painter that we shall find (if it is to be found) the influence of literature in general or, let us say, of certain ideas in particular.

For us, the interest lies in seeing whether the ideas of the painter Delacroix are to be found in the poet Baudelaire, and vice versa.

First of all, we would say then that at the beginning of the nineteenth century no painter felt himself to be so much the contemporary of the poets among whom he lived as Delacroix, no painter interpreted certain literary scenes with such passion, nor dramatised history with such eloquence; and none was so nobly appreciated nor

[1] Du Bos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, 1719.

so justly celebrated by Baudelaire himself, both in his important critical articles and in the ever famous lines :—

'Delacroix, lac de sang, hanté de mauvais anges,
Ombragé par un bois de sapins toujours vert,
Où, sous un ciel chagrin, des fanfares étranges
Passent comme un soupir étouffé de Weber.'

No one has ever criticised Delacroix better than Baudelaire in the following passages :—

'What Delacroix has *translated* better than any one else is the untranslatable, the impalpable, the dream, the nerves, the soul; and he has done all this without other means than form and colour; he has done it better than any one else, with the perfection of a consummate painter, with the precision of a subtle man of letters, the eloquence of a passionate musician. *However, it is one of the symptoms of the spiritual condition of our century that the arts aspire to, if not supplementing one another, at least to lending each other new forces.*

'Delacroix is the most suggestive of all painters, the artist whose works, even if you make a choice among the secondary and weaker ones, give rise to the most thought, and call to mind the greatest number of poetical feelings and thoughts known, but which were believed to be buried for ever in the night of the past.'

And then Baudelaire adds these profound lines :—

'Every one knows that yellow, orange, red, inspire and represent ideas of joy, riches, glory and love. . . . The art of the colourist is evidently related on some sides to mathematics and music.'

What we must again point out is the way in which Baudelaire characterises Delacroix, and that in which Théophile Gautier in his turn characterises Baudelaire. For while Gautier points out in Baudelaire

'the morbidly rich shades of decay in a more or less advanced stage, those tones of pearl and mother-of-pearl, like ice covering over stagnant waters; hectic flushes, consumptive pallor, this jaundiced ochre of extravasated bile, leaden greys of mephitic mist, and all the scale of tortured colours carried to the highest point, corresponding to autumn, sunset, over-ripe fruits, and the last hours of civilisations,'

Baudelaire admires in Delacroix, as we have just seen, *le lac de sang, hanté de mauvais anges.* In describing him he speaks of the cruelty of his expression.[1]

He also speaks (as we shall see a little further on) of the violet or greenish backgrounds which reveal the phosphorescence of decay and the hint of storm.

What at once strikes the student of Baudelaire and Delacroix is the restlessness of both painter and poet. They have neither calm strength nor serene beauty.

Delacroix's characters, like Baudelaire's, like Baudelaire himself, struggle and are contorted—they are always the damned of Delacroix's famous picture 'Dante and Virgil.' Both these artists are painters of violence: from some of Delacroix's pictures, as from some of Baudelaire's poems, there emanates the odour of the charnel-house.

A study of Delacroix's heads suggests the idea that he was realising an ideal of cruelty. The eyes have a faun-like expression, the jaws a tigerish ferocity. It is in creating monsters that his talent reaches its height.

If the resemblance between the two men is to be accentuated, the critic has only to study the interiors in which Delacroix seeks by the aid of voluptuous half-shades to render the charm of the female body.

For ourselves, if we had to sum up, in a few lines, the art of the painter and the revolution he brought about, and the art of the poet and the revolution he brought about, we would apply the same words to both—we would say: 'Both restored to colour all its rights and importance—the one in painting, the other in poetry.'

We have only to think of the school of David and the grey ideal it had imposed for thirty years.

We have only to consider the grey style of the erotic

[1] 'Il a pu quelquefois, car il ne manquait certes de tendresse, consacrer son pinceau à l'expression de sentiments tendres et voluptueux, mais là encore l'inguérissable amertume était répandue à forte dose, et l'insouciance et la joie en étaient absentes.'

school before Baudelaire, and its chief Parny. Is it possible to imagine a language which could be thinner, drier, more insipid?

Both, too, created 'new thrills,' by revealing the affinities of our senses: Delacroix by rendering painting, as it were, musical, combining his luminous vibrations so as to make a harmony of them; Baudelaire seeking above all to make artistic transpositions.

To be exact, we must point out that it was the English spirit which revealed them to themselves. With Baudelaire there is no doubt about it—we have shown how he studied Poe. As for Delacroix, not only was he friendly with Bonnington and Thales Fielding, but he had an almost instinctive love of English romantic literature. It was this taste which led him to visit London in 1823, on which occasion he admired Kean in several Shakespearean rôles, and Terry as Mephistopheles in an adaptation of Faust.

But the most interesting proof of their resemblance lies in the fact that they each created a similar school. Both were the fathers of impressionism—the one of impressionism in painting, the other of impressionism in poetry.

When Poussin says: 'The pretty girls who pass by in the streets of Nîmes at their appearance delight the mind no less than the beautiful columns of the *Maison Carrée*, seeing that the latter are but copies of the former,' the thought though deep is but the thought of a draughtsman.

If we wish to know what thoughts were suggested to Delacroix by beautiful forms in the sun, we have only to consult his Journal. He tells us how one day he notices the effect of the ragamuffins who climb up the statues of the fountain in the Place St. Sulpice, and of the *raboteur* he sees from his window in the gallery.

He notes how much in the latter the half-tints of the flesh are coloured in comparison with the inert matter, and he adds: 'Flesh has its true colour only in the open air.'

Thus while Poussin sees the subject as a sculptor, while

what he aims at rendering is attitude, Delacroix is indeed intoxicated with what he sees. Born with a highly impressionable eye, he was continually studying and seeking his way till the day when Constable's pictures were exhibited in Paris. His notes and his letters prove that he felt absolutely dazzled by these paintings.

Seeking to enter into rivalry with the English painter he soon arrived at the conclusion that the strokes should never be blended. We read in his Journal :—

'Green and violet tones put on crudely, here and there in the light part *without mixing them* . . . green and violet: with these shades it is indispensable to put them on one after the other, and not mix them on the palette.'

Then the question arises: what law shall preside at this juxtaposition of strokes? Delacroix discovered it by chance after noticing a yellow carriage with its violet shadow.[1] When he was engaged on painting a yellow drapery which he could not make bright enough he understood the lesson that the yellow carriage was teaching him. From that moment he set himself to study the laws of complementary colours and their modifications by light.

He seems to have been the first to foresee the recomposition on the retina of the colours that are separated on the canvas. Thus he was really, as Paul Signac calls him, the ancestor of the impressionists.

In the same way Baudelaire is the ancestor of the impressionist poets. At the same time as Gautier, but certainly better than he, he not only makes an extraordinary transposition of art, but he is the standard-bearer of all the younger generation who loved the violent, convulsed, and tragic side of nature.

Joubert said of Bernardin de Saint Pierre :—

'There is in his style a prism which tires the eyes. When you have been reading him for a long time you are delighted to see the

[1] Théophile Silvestre, *Les artistes français*.

plants and trees less highly coloured in the country than in his writings.'

One wonders what he would have said of Baudelaire, for greater brush magic is not to be desired.

We will content ourselves with quoting a few lines of Charles Asselineau (see Appendix to *Fleurs du Mal*, p. 391) which give a wonderfully good idea of the reader's impression on reading Baudelaire :—

'The piece "Parfum Exotique" is remarkable for this faculty of seizing upon the imperceptible and giving a picturesque reality to the most subtle and fleeting sensations. The poet seated beside his mistress one autumn evening is intoxicated by a warm perfume; he finds in this perfume something strange and exotic which makes him dream of far-off lands, and immediately there pass by in the mirror of his thought *blessed banks, dazzled by the sun's fires*, languid islets where curious trees grow, Indians with lithe active bodies, women with bold look.

> 'Je vois un port rempli de voiles et de mâts
> Encor tout fatigués par la vague marine,
> Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers,
> Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine,
> Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers !

'If I wanted to cite other proofs of this rare magical faculty of picturesque creation, examples would flow from my pen. Since I am forced to limit myself, having been too diffuse, I can only refer the reader to the pieces called *les Phares*, *la Muse Malade*, *le Guignon*, *la Vie Antérieure*, *De Profundis clamavi*, *le Balcon*, *la Cloche fêlée*, etc.'

It pleases us to put forward contemporary opinions on this subject, and here is what a master—Barbey d'Aurevilly—thought of Baudelaire's style :—

'Picture to yourself something in flamboyant Gothic or Moorish architecture applied to this simple construction which has a subject, object, and verb; then in the crumblings and flutings of a sentence which takes as many diverse forms as would crystal, imagine all that is richest and strongest in every spice, every alcohol, every poison,

mineral, vegetable, and animal, which is drawn out of the heart of man—if they could be rendered visible, and you have Baudelaire's poetry, this sinister, violent, heartrending, deadly poetry, approached by nothing in the most sombre works of this age which is conscious of its approaching death.'

Baudelaire always respected the laws of syntax; the poet, in the same way as Delacroix compared with the neo-impressionists, is a classic compared with the decadents.

But his great disciple Huysmans was soon to appear, and he was to disarticulate and dissect his language. Let us take, for example, the passage that M. Paul Bourget quotes in his *Etudes et Portraits*, the passage which is to be found in Huysmans' novel *En Ménage*:—

'Then add a wild hubbub, hoarse shouts, answered by the shrill rattle—like women's voices; then on every side, under the verdigrised tarpaulins, the flapping of blue and white workmen's blouses, red notes struck by the jerseys, spots of mauve daubed in by the striped blouses of the butchers; finally the white of women's coifs, and the sable in the ceaseless rise and fall of caps in the endless tide of heads.'

'Examine this sentence,' says M. Bourget, 'limb by limb, putting aside all your recollections of classical prose. Is it not true that the writer sees in objects no longer their line but their stroke, the kind of discordant hole they make upon the uniform background of day, and that the almost barbaric decomposition of adjective and substantive seems to produce itself naturally; *les noirs des casquettes . . . les coups de rouge des gilets*? . . .'

We will take *Certains* and open it at random. Here is a description of the entry of the crusaders into Constantinople. After having described the abject fatigue of their faces, he shows us the 'fumées de sentiments qui passent sur elles,' and, doubtless to show us to what point he follows the precepts of his master, speaks to us of a 'hallali de flammes de couleurs sur un fond d'océan et de ciel d'un splendide bleu.'

If we open *En Route* again, what finer transposition of art can be found than this passage:—

'These children's voices stretched to breaking point, these clear sharp voices threw into the darkness of the chant the paleness of dawn; joining the pure soft muslin of their notes to the sounding bronze of the basses, piercing as with a jet of living silver the sombre cataract of the deeper voices, they sharpened the wailing, strengthened and embittered the burning salt of tears, but also insinuated a kind of protective caress, balsamic cool, lustral aid: they lit up in the darkness those brief gleams which tinkle in the angelus at dawn; they evoked, anticipating the prophecies of the text, the compassionate image of the Virgin, who in the pale light of their notes, passed into the night of that chant.'

Baudelaire never went quite so far as this in language, but he had shown the way with this sentence on Edgar Poe :—

'Like our great Eugène Delacroix, who raised his art to the height of great poetry, Edgar Poe loves to make his figures act upon greenish violet backgrounds whereon are revealed the phosphorescence of decay and the scent of storm.'

In *En Route* Huysmans has written some such astonishing pages that we no longer read his book for the sake of the story, but rather to admire the mastery—one might almost say the butcherly mastery—with which he makes martyr of his language.

Let us sum up. Baudelaire and Delacroix are expressions of their age. By their teaching, by their work, they have gained admirers and disciples, but herein their age too has been a great help to them.

In no age was so much attention paid to science and exotism. Through science the painter was able to compose a wonderful chromatic repertoire for himself.

On the exotic side Japanese influence too was to make itself felt, bringing with it, as it were, a new conception of art—(the conception was in nowise new. Hokusai's work reminds Edmond de Goncourt of the delightful *gribouillis* of Gabriel de St. Aubin), or at least an old conception which appeared new, and which seemed, in its exotism, a more delightful form of impressionism.

II

But when the influence of Delacroix, and the relation between the minds of Delacroix and Baudelaire have been pointed out, we have not finished with the subject of Baudelairism in painting.

Baudelaire had in time become a force and in his turn reacted upon certain artistic minds, and on the most sensitive and the most literary of these—such as Gustave Moreau, Degas, Odilon Redon, the etcher Rops, and that exquisite draughtsman who in his turn is also a creator—Aubrey Beardsley.

The side of Baudelaire that influenced Moreau is the *artificial* side. Théophile Gautier, speaking of Baudelaire's curious poem, called 'Rêve Parisien,' and which is dedicated to Constantin Guys (who is so little known and so interesting), wrote the following lines :—

'Imagine an extra-natural landscape, or rather a perspective composed of metal, marble and water, and from which the vegetable is banished as being irregular. Everything is rigid, polished, glistening under a sunless, moonless, starless sky. In the midst of the silence of eternity there rise up, lit by their own fire, palaces, turrets, colonnades, staircases, reservoirs whence great cataracts fall like crystal curtains. Blue waters frame themselves like the steel of antique mirrors in the quays and bronze basins, where precious stones flow silently under the bridges. The liquid is set in crystalline rays, and the porphyry flags on the terrace reflect the surrounding objects like a looking-glass. The Queen of Sheba walking there would have held up her gown fearing to make her feet wet, so shining are the surfaces. The style of this piece is as brilliant as polished black marble.'

Does not this read like an ante-dated description of some of Moreau's paintings?

If we turn once more to Huysmans' *Certains* (for it is always to him that we have recourse when there is question of describing certain pictures), we find this description of Gustave Moreau's work :—

'Upon this background with its terrible turmoil there pass to and fro in silence women, some nude, some clad in stuffs embroidered with uncut gems like the bindings of old missals, women with silky flaxen hair; pale blue eyes, fixed and hard; with flesh of icy milk-like whiteness; motionless Salomes holding in a basin the head of the Forerunner preserved in phosphorus, and sending forth rays of light under quincunxes with twisted leaves of a green so dark it is almost black; goddesses riding upon hippogriffs, striping with their lapis wings the agony of the dying skies; crowned female idols, erect on their thrones whose steps are lost under weird flowers, or seated in rigid positions upon elephants whose foreheads are swathed in green, their chests covered with orphrey, with long pearls sewn on like cavalry bells, elephants who trampled upon their massive reflection shown in a pool rippled by the columns of their huge braceleted legs.'

Here, Huysmans strives to rival the painter in richness of colour.[1] We will only say in our turn that Gustave Moreau, who early shut himself up in his ivory tower (like so many nineteenth-century artists whose motto is *Odi profanum vulgus*), was seeking all his life, while he painted antique myth in magnificent background, to express the sadness of another Baudelaire—a Baudelaire who was gnawing at his heart.

How far removed are these Salomes, these Jasons, these Venuses, these Herodiases, these Centaurs from the conception of ancient myth or of the Bible! It is the nineteenth-century malady that racks them, and their languor and their sadness are rendered the more profound by these fantastic landscapes which intoxicate and dazzle.

If we wish to understand to what extent Gustave Moreau is Baudelairian, we have only to think of Puvis de

[1] A page from Huysmans' *La Cathédrale* furnishes further proof of the way in which the writer of this school utilises the painter's weapons. Huysmans wants to convey to us that the character of the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon is in the highest degree interesting. You might expect him to refer you to a contemporary French psychologian. Not at all. He has recourse to a painter, to Gustave Moreau, as if this artist's brush were capable of expressing by means of colour the shades of this mysterious queen's soul.

Chavannes, who is a kind of Virgil. There is no better rendering of this painter's art than those lines of Virgil,

> 'Devenere locos laetos et amoena vireta
> Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas.
> Largior hic campus aether et lumine vestit
> Purpureo ; solemque suum, sua sidera norunt,'

just as no landscape is more elysian than that of Puvis de Chavannes.

We cannot hope to study here the work of such artists as Degas, the master, as Forain, his pupil, as Félicien Rops, or as Odilon Redon. In all of them we find the same condition of mind, the same feeling of contempt, of hatred even for the world they live in. Odilon Redon in order to escape from it paints macabre and somnambulic figures, which distantly recall those of Gustave Moreau, and with him nightmare re-enters art—for the love of the grotesque is of all time.

Félicien Rops—intellectually libertine and morally virtuous—like Watteau, threw himself into Satanism, and it is to him far more than to Goethe that this passage of Emerson applies :—

'Take the most remarkable example that could occur of this tendency to verify every term in popular use. The Devil has played an important part in mythology in all times. Goethe would have no word that does not cover a thing'

(how well that applies to Rops !)

'so he flies at the throat of this imp. He shall be real, he shall be modern, he shall dress "like a gentleman" and walk in the streets, and be well initiated in the life of Vienna and of Heidelberg in 1820—or he shall not exist. . . . He found that the essence of this hobgoblin which had hovered in shadow about the habitations of men, ever since there were men, was pure intellect applied—as always there is a tendency—to the service of the senses. . . .'[1]

[1] Emerson, *Representative Men* : 'Goethe or the Writer.'

As for Degas and Forain, who are both exceedingly powerful artists,[1] they took from Baudelaire his love of realism—not the simple realism of Courbet, but a realism which is able, while remaining always open, to show us the reality which lies hid under the appearance of things.

III. Aubrey Beardsley

A study of Baudelairism in painting would be incomplete did we not speak of a young artist who met with premature death at the age of twenty-six, and who might be called the Baudelaire of the pencil—a Baudelaire in miniature, unhealthy, feminine, and in nowise classic.

With his first works Aubrey Beardsley became celebrated—his drawings went further than those of the artists of the moment, they haunted you for whole days together, and took you into the mysterious and terrible country whose gates Botticelli's angels seem to open rather than to guard.

Critics who study his drawings (for practically all Aubrey Beardsley's work is pen and ink drawing) always discern the influence of Burne Jones on the young artist. And we know that it was from Botticelli that Burne Jones took his women's faces, lengthening the chin, sensualising the lips, and hollowing the middle of the face. Are we then to attribute the magic of Beardsley's work to a single artifice in drawing? No, for we have certain drawings and some letters which explain the peculiar character and the Baudelairism of his art. In that collection of his *Last Letters* we find this passage :—

'Do you know of Fr. Philpin of the Brompton oratory? He is, I believe, the doyen of the community and a considerable painter.

[1] Cf. Huysmans' *L'art moderne*, p. 120: Quand comprendra-t-on que ce peintre (Degas) est le plus grand que nous possédions aujourd'hui en France? Je ne suis pas prophète, mais si j'en juge par l'ineptie des classes éclairées qui, après avoir longtemps honni Delacroix, ne se doute pas encore que Baudelaire est le poète de génie du XIXe siècle, qu'il domine de cent pieds tous les autres. . . .'

But what a stumbling-block such pious men must find in the practice of their art.'

This is an illuminating passage on the conception that Beardsley had of *his* art.

Aubrey Beardsley saw that Burne Jones only arrived at the mannered elegance of his figures, and at the now reflective, now evil passion of their attitude by violating certain laws of drawing (for example, by drawing people eight and a half heads high).

So in his turn he set himself to dislocate and exaggerate limbs as Burne Jones had done before him.[1] He gave rein to his fancy, and his drawings were veritable stumbling-blocks for every one but himself.

The Japanese, as was to be expected, early had a great influence on him. Their exquisite drawings, in which the daintiness of everything Japanese charms us so much, could not fail to please a draughtsman who was himself so delicate.

But Beardsley is never caricatural (as are his German imitators). His charm lies precisely in the fact that he is excessive and true at the same time; he rides a capricious steed along by the frontier of unreality, but never crosses the boundary.

In his literary experiments Aubrey Beardsley showed the same curiously artificial imagination. Writing was in his eyes an intricate game. He composed sentences that pleased him with combinations of curiously invented words, and then proceeded to discover how best he could fit them into a scheme. His 'Under the Hill,' an unfinished adaptation of the Tannhäuser legend, is a commentary on his imagination. Everything is artificial, but with such detailed artificiality. The book opens at evening :—

'It was taper-time; when the tired earth puts on its cloak of

[1] As M. Robert de la Sizeranne has remarked, Burne Jones always exaggerates the width of the hips in his women and diminishes it in his men, and always throws all the weight of the body on to one leg.

mists and shadows, when the enchanted woods are full of delicate influences, and even the beaux, seated at their dressing-tables, dream a little.'

The description of the garden is as complete as any of his drawings :—

'In the middle was a huge bronze fountain with three basins. From the first rose a many-breasted dragon and four little loves mounted upon swans, and each love was furnished with a bow and arrow. Two of them that faced the dragon seemed to recoil in fear, two that were behind made bold enough to aim their shafts at him. From the verge of the second sprang a circle of slim golden columns that supported silver doves with tails and wings spread out. The third, held by a group of grotesquely attenuated satyrs, is centred with a thin pipe hung with masks and roses and capped with children's heads.'

And is not this an entirely characteristic description of Fanfreluche's appearance :—

'He wore long black silk stockings, a pair of pretty garters, a very elegant ruffled shirt, slippers, and a wonderful dressing-gown.'

The description of the *Woods of Auffray*, though less sharply defined, is even more atmospheric :—

'In the distance through the trees gleamed a still argent lake, a reticent water that must have held the subtlest fish that ever were. Around its marge the trees and flags and fleurs de luce were unbreakably asleep.

'I fell into a strange mood as I looked at the lake, for it seemed to me that the thing would speak, reveal some curious secret, say some beautiful word if I should dare to wrinkle its pale face with a pebble.

'Then the lake took fantastic shapes, grew to twenty times its size, or shrank into a miniature of itself without ever closing its unruffled calm and deathly reserve. When the waters increased I was very frightened, for I thought how huge the frogs must have become. I thought of their big eyes and monstrous wet feet; but when the water lessened I laughed to myself, for I thought how tiny the frogs must have grown; I thought of their legs that must look

thinner than spiders; of their dwindled croaking that never could be heard.

'Perhaps the lake was only painted after all; I had seen things like it at the theatre. Anyhow it was a wonderful lake, a beautiful lake.'

Though so often macabre (had he a presentiment of his approaching end?) yet he has the sense of joy—a joy which is cold and cunning. For him who has eyes to see, his illustrations for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* are its most terrible criticism. While Oscar Wilde meant to write a poetical-religious-sensual drama, Aubrey Beardsley with the thousand arabesques of his pen illustrated a vicious comedy. He shows us a sort of fairyland, enigmatic, as is every proper fairyland, and it is so interesting that we forget the subject in thinking of the artist's elaborations.

He could be mystic too (and it should be remembered that he died a good Catholic), as in his Saint Rosa of Lima. Had he, later, thrown himself into devotional art, his exquisite talent would have renewed the inspiration of that religious art which Huysmans so happily called 'bondieusard.'

There is nothing Latin nor Italian in him, but a good deal of eighteenth-century France. It is when he is drawing frills and furbelows, great ladies' paniers, embroidered corsages, flowers and powder puffs, and all the thousand tiny details that contain so much of woman's personality that he is in his element.

To accuse him of immorality were but idleness; for he plays with the surface of things. We have the impression of a cold temperament united with a riotous imagination.

However that may be, Baudelaire would have recognised a descendant in this sincere artist who is dissatisfied with the world and with life, and who has left us a picture of it which, though it be at certain moments satanic, with hint of phosphorus and cantharides, is never gross, never coarse, but always charming and truly artistic.

PART VII

THE BAUDELAIRIAN SPIRIT IN MUSIC

THE impotence of language to analyse emotion never comes home to us with so much force as when we come to consider the feelings aroused in us by music. Still it has appeared to us interesting to see if we can discover in music any trace of the Baudelairian spirit.

The first thing that strikes us in modern music is that our age, though an age of extremely advanced technical mastery, is not an age of deep inspiration—and it is the change of inspiration that marks the difference between the modern and classical music.

The change of inspiration may be conveniently taken as beginning with Wagner (Wagner being the great theoretician — and leaving aside for the moment the question of what Wagner owed to Weber). It was Wagner who first so definitely proclaimed the importance of the universality of art, declaring that since painting, literature, and music suggest only one mode of life, and that life is the union of these three, the aim of the artist now should be to show this union in his art.

As he says in his letter on Music :—

'I recognised that it was just where one of these arts reached its impassable limits that—with most rigorous precision—the sphere of action of the next began, and that consequently with the intimate union of these two arts one would express with the most satisfactory clearness what each of them could not express by itself—and that, on the contrary, any effort to render by means of one of them that which could only be rendered by the two together must necessarily lead to obscurity—to confusion first, and then to the degeneration and corruption of each art in particular.'

As Wagner himself pointed out, not all subjects are open to this: 'It would be dangerous to transpose a genre picture into frescoe.'

That Wagner succeeded in his aim is proved by the fact that many people to whom music in the ordinary way makes no strong appeal are attracted by Wagner, and if you discuss Wagner with such people you will find that they make a *pictorial* interpretation of his music. Wagner himself laid stress on the importance of scenery; his view is that of Schiller, 'Die Musik in höchste Veredlung muss Gestalt werden.' We do not for a moment mean to suggest that all Wagnerites interpret Wagner in this way, only it is certain that a great number of people who are not deep musicians delight in Wagner's music and interpret it into 'clear outlines,' 'running streams,' 'green peaceful forests.' That is the aim of Wagner's music. But Wagner, of course, is helped by the story — he weaves his music round one of the world's greatest legends, and it cannot be denied that our knowledge of it helps him to produce the desired *sensation*. The question is rather to decide to what point and in what way purely instrumental music realises the Baudelairian ideal of suggestive art of sensation. Baudelaire himself said on this subject:—

'I have often heard it said that music could not boast of translating anything whatsoever with the same certainty as words or painting. This is true up to a certain point, but it is not quite true. It translates in its own way and by the means at its disposal. In music, as in painting and in writing, there is always a gap filled in by the imagination of the hearer.

'The really surprising thing would be if sound could not suggest colour, if colour could not give an idea of melody, and if sound and colour were unable to translate ideas; since things have expressed themselves by means of a reciprocal analogy from the day on which God pronounced the world a complex indivisible totality.'

But with this theory the hearer is left more or less free

to draw what interpretation he will from the music he hears—it becomes a question of mood.

But the 'Baudelairian' composer goes further, and translates into his music a certain idea, and that idea only.

To take an example from vocal music, from perhaps the most perfect collection of songs ever written—the 'Dichterliebe' of Schumann. We have only to think of how an indifferent singer can entirely destroy the effect of the close :—

'Da hab' ich ihn verstanden
Mein Sehnung und Verlangen—'

spite of Heine's words, and then turn to Strauss's songs and think of the closing effect of 'Morgen' :—

'Und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes Schweigen'

of which—given of course that the singer consent to follow musical direction, and does not sing fortissimos where the composer marks pianissimos—the effect cannot be destroyed, will always suggest ineffable ecstasy. Our object was in no way to prove Strauss a greater lied-writer than Schumann, nor even to compare the two, but simply to point out that into the modern music has entered a new element—the element of the literary idea. And if it be objected that songs are no proof on account of the resource they gather from the words—we have only to think of Strauss's instrumental work to see that the same holds true.

For what is this continual series of 'symphonic poems' but the effort to produce a literary sensation through music? We have only to think of the titles. In the old days the composer came forward and gave you a symphony in A or a suite in G, now we are given a 'Heldenleben,' or an 'Also sprach Zarathustra,' and a humorously charming 'Till Eulenspiegel';—inspiration has become artificial. In the same way, the Wagnerian use of *motives* is another method of personifying the *idea*.

Strauss, of course, has carried on this device, though not so plainly in 'Elektra,' yet very definitely in 'Salome.'

Debussy does not make this use of motives, and thus his music is more purely 'Baudelairian'—in that it is more purely sensational. Strauss's music, too, is sensational, but in a different way. He produces his sensational effects through the tension to which he has screwed up our nerves. 'Elektra,' with the exception of the beautiful meeting of Orestes and Elektra, is merely the impression of terror from beginning to end, and the nervous strain of following it grows greater, and not less, as we hear it more often.[1]

The Baudelairian aim at 'astonishing,' which undoubtedly does play its part in Strauss's advanced orchestration, is here allowed free play. Mr. Machen, speaking on a different subject, well pointed out that production of sensation is not necessarily art, and takes the case of a woman receiving a telegram telling her her husband has been killed in a railway accident; she experiences a sensation, an emotion of the strongest order, but the telegram is not art. The same could be applied within limits to some of Strauss's compositions. The sensation of Debussy, on the other hand, is of a different type—far gentler, far more impressionist. Like Strauss he yields from time to time to pure desire to astonish, and writes series of discords which produce a strong protesting thrill from our nerves.

There is no music which is so difficult to analyse in words as Debussy's. It is all atmosphere—mysterious, elusive, and to the highest point impressionist. This is partially explicable by his use of the open scale, and in his vocal work by his suppression of voice. The older lied-writers write for the voice, aiming at

[1] Cf. Nietzsche's reproach to Wagner that he has made music morbid, and again, 'he has divined in music the expedient for exciting fatigued nerves,'—which is certainly what Strauss does.

giving the voice scope for showing its beauty. Debussy and his school keep the voice at a pianissimo, and aim only at making it render the effect of their idea. And the sensation produced, the form of enjoyment, is literary. The 'Flûte de Pan,' for example, from the very opening transports us into another world—a Pan-ic world; it is a shrill scale on Pan's pipe, and we are made to think of satyrs and fauns, and the legends we know of them. It is this quality which enabled Debussy to give his perfect translation of 'L'Après-midi d'un Faune.' There is nothing contemplative in our state of mind then, or very little; it is pathological only.

There is no great feeling in such music, nor can we transport our deep feelings into it—in this way it is the most entirely removed from didacticism (if such expression be not too far-fetched), and therein again Baudelairian.

Again, what is this taste of modern composers for continual change of time signature but the musical translation of what the advanced 'vers libristes' did for poetry, the same breaking up of traditional measures?

Debussy himself says that it is well for the composer to be entirely detached from his age—he has the Baudelairian fear of nature as a disturbing element. César Franck, too, believed in this theory of detachment, and carried his theory into effect; yet side by side with the detached purity of his religious music exists his 'Sonata for Violin and Piano'—the greatest passionate cry of modern music. But Debussy carries his art-for-art theory to the point of banishing passion. Hence the coldness of his music, the continual impression of artificiality—neither of which qualities make for durability.

CONCLUSION[1]

THERE is no more well-worn commonplace than the reproach made to Baudelaire and his school of lacking sincerity. By that is meant doubtless that the Baudelairians with their desire to *épater le bourgeois* merely aimed at having thoughts different from those of the common ruck.

'Il nous faut du nouveau, n'en fût-il plus au monde,' such is the motto of their school; and if the reader be scandalised, so much the better!

The best answer to such criticism is to be found, curiously enough, in Mr. A. J. Balfour's remarkable *Foundations of Belief*. The shades of the Baudelairians may well rejoice in such an advocate.

In the chapter on 'Naturalism and Æsthetic,' Mr. Balfour writes:—

'In music, the artist's desire for originality of expression has been aided generation after generation by the discovery of new methods, new forms, new instruments. From the bare simplicity of the ecclesiastical chant or the village dance to the ordered complexity of the modern score, the art has passed through successive stages of development, in each genius has discovered devices of harmony, devices of instrumentation, and devices of rhythm which would have been musical paradoxes to preceding generations and became musical commonplaces to the generations that followed after.'

Apply this statement not only to music, but to all the

[1] In the *Eye-Witness* of June 27, 1912, appeared a remarkable article by J. C. Squire, entitled 'A Dead Man,' to which we take the liberty of referring the reader. Therein he will see again the permanent influence of Baudelaire, which it was the aim of this book to prove.

arts, and you have the explanation of the fact that that which is a mere commonplace in the eyes of the man on your right, is a 'joy for ever' in the eyes of the man on your left.

Our senses are, of course, infinitely subtilised by use—the eyes and ears of the mature man who has read and thought are quite different from what they were in his youth. And as they become more subtle, they grow proportionately more exacting.

Ever since the time of Zeuxis, painting has discovered new manners of representing the universe, each manner more intense with the succeeding centuries. Titian's colour, which would have dazzled Parrhasius, is already sombre in our eyes.

In the same way, ever since the time of the Assyrian potter man has sought to paint in words Nature's infinite diversity. What we call 'impressionism' in art is nothing but the very natural desire to make the life-blood of things course through the fibres of the paper under the printed page.

It is possible, as Mr. Balfour says, that 'this amazing musical development has added little to the felicity of mankind.' But what recked Baudelaire of benefits to the human race? His business was with Art. In his eyes—as in ours—the sacred character of a work of art lies in the fact that it represents (or better still suggests) the prodigious efforts of human genius lying behind it.

In all ages, in all countries, the immutable light of Beauty has appeared to the artist; every age contributes to the widening of the furtive fugitive rays from the matchless vision.

As M. Bergson has so well observed, there is between ourselves and nature, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness, a veil. With the ordinary man it is dense, impenetrable almost, but with the poet wellnigh transparent.

Art, then, should aim first of all at soaking off the labels that long habit has imposed on things, should set aside all commonplace and well-worn generalities, in order to show us things as they are, to reveal nature to us.

Let us then be grateful to Baudelaire and the line of his great followers, since they have been able to suggest to us new combinations of words, colours, and sounds such as literature, painting and music were incapable of expressing before them.

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